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The New Literacy: The Case for
Primary Media Education

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DECLARATION

I, Jean O'Halloran, being a candidate for the degree of Master of Arts as awarded by Dublin City University, declare that while registered for the above degree I have not been a registered candidate for an award at 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.

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"I wish first that we should recognise that education is ordinary: that it is before everything else, the process of giving to the ordinary members of society its full common meanings, and the skills that will enable them to amend those meanings, in the light of their personal and common experience"

Raymond Williams <u>Resources of Hope</u>
Verso, 1989

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ABSTRACT

This project represents an attempt to examine and evaluate the educational impact of media studies on the formative years of schooling. Some of the skills, strategies and procedures students must adopt in engaging with this subject are examined in assessing the possible role it can play in the cognitive and creative development of primary aged students.

Chapter One provides an overview of current debates concerning the social, cultural and psychological implications of different media. This discussion explores in particular the cognitively-relevant characteristics of visual media and their growing significance as conveyors of meaning within the cultural domain. The centrality of the image within modern communication systems has prompted many theorists and educationalists to consider the possibilities for broader models of discourse which would inform our educational provisions from the earliest levels. This discussion is taken up again in Chapter Two where some of the initiatives and experiments in media studies programmes from neighbouring European countries are examined. These programmes, while disparate, share a common emphasis on language in its composite sense (i.e. as composed of words, images and sounds) and stress the need to forge links between the school experience and subcultural experiences of young children.

Chapter Three addresses current theories of child development and learning exploring possible continuities and connections between the more recent theories and the pedagogical fundamentals of media studies classes. Of particular relevance in this discussion are emerging perspectives which question many of the existing principles and assumptions which underly our educational provisions at this level. Current policy and actual classroom practice in the Irish context are also examined in attempting to determine both the theoretical and practical implications of introducing media studies onto the primary curriculum.

Chapters Four and Five consist of a case study which attempts to test and evaluate some of the developing assumptions concerning the cognitive, creative and analytical skills which are enabled through a media pedagogy. Data recorded during a series of media studies classes provides a resource from which to generate inferences and interpretations of the kinds of learning strategies and intellectual skills students appear to be adopting.

INTRODUCTION

Many of the studies in teaching and learning undertaken in recent years tend to point to the conclusion that a fundamental reappraisal of the functions of schooling is now necessary if education is to keep up with the changing needs of society. Socio-economic development with its attendant shift from predominantly print based information systems to a range of electronic media has caused changes in lifestyles, behaviours, patterns of thinking and in our conceptions of knowledge itself. Facilitating the fulfillment of these changes in positive and productive ways is the task of the educative process, a task which is compounded by the evolving nature of a society, whose future shape we cannnot foresee. Teaching then, can no longer be defined as the imparting of prescribed bodies of knowledge and information but must also encompass the less tangible task of developing a critically informed intelligence in relation to the environment; the abilities to analyse, interpret, speculate, explore new meanings and the development of an intrinsic motivation to continue learning in this way are some of the basic requirements of education today.

One of the contemporary approaches to education which appears to encompass such learning skills is that provided through media education. The object of this project is to examine this thesis, evaluate to what extent such claims are valid

and assess the educational implications of introducing this subject onto the primary curriculum. In the debates surrounding media education over the past twenty years, the primary school has remained firmly on the periphery of our concerns. This is most evident in the Irish context where media studies has only recently found a place within the secondary system at the Junior level. In many European countries however, there is a growing awareness of its value at this level and many initiatives are already in progress.

Children's exposure to the media, particularily television and radio begins before school age and quickly becomes a major source for gathering information about the world and their environment. Some statistical evidence would go on to suggest that it is during this period that adult media habits are formed. Yet it is also during this period when basic learning habits and thinking processes begin to take shape, when discovery can be at its richest and most dynamic.

This project takes a critical look at the influence media education can have on children's development during these formative years of schooling. The key questions then revolve around the differential characteristics of media, their social, cultural and psychological implications and the relationship between these and current educational theory, policies and practice. Chapter One reviews some of the theoretical discussions that have informed debates about the media and education generally. Broader models of literacy are explored and assessed in terms of their educational

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possibilities and cognitive potential. The approach taken in this chapter is multi-disciplinary yet vital issues about meaning emerge as central concerns throughout the various debates. The question of how meaning is conveyed and recovered through different symbolic forms, invites speculation about the extended concept of 'communication'. The direction taken in many European initiatives addresses this wider context developing primary media education programmes from this broader model of discourse. Chapter Two provides a review of some of the programmes and experiments currently in progress.

In order to examine the educational impact of media-related materials, tasks, discussions and methodologies, it is necessary to return to the fundamentals of educational psychology and its applications within our schools. Renewed interest in sociocultural perspectives on teaching, learning and development has raised some important questions about our educational provisions at the primary level in Ireland. Drawing on the work of Vygotsky, Bruner and others a case is made in Chapter Three for a revised conception of education which would draw the practice of media education to the centre of our curriculum concerns. Current policy is also addressed in this chapter in exploring the existing links between the underlying principles of primary education and those of a media pedagogy. Also significant in this discussion is the nature of actual classroom practice in Irish schools. Research and commentary is reviewed which

raise some serious doubts about the potential future of media education in the Irish primary system.

Chapters Four and Five consist of a case study carried out to test and evaluate some of the hypotheses which have been developed concerning learning and cognition in a media studies class. Using data recorded in a real situation allows us to examine in detail how children respond to the subjects requirements generating a clearer picture of the skills, strategies and procedures which emerge.

This project seeks to go beyond simple assertions about the educational value of media studies programmes. As the subject remains incidental to the Irish primary system, it was considered necessary to carry out a study which could investigate its full implications for the social, cultural and psychological development of the child. Drawing on such a broad range of work, gaps will undoubtedly occur. Much work remains to be done in fully exploring many of these issues. This project draws together various strands of current relevant theories in an attempt to contribute to this ongoing work.

CHAPTER 1

MEDIA, LITERACY AND SCHOOLING : A REVIEW OF THE SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND THEORY

1.1 Introduction

Media education is centrally concerned with developing in students a critical awareness and understanding of their social and cultural environment. In achieving this, many textbooks maintain that important critical, analytical and creative skills are developed. In this chapter the work of theorists from various disciplines will be examined in order to review and assess some of the theoretical principles which underly this belief. Hence, for the purposes of this chapter, the term media education is taken at times in its broadest, most literal sense. The dichotomy that has arisen between the terms media didactics and media education (i.e. the use of media as instruments of study or objects of study), is ignored in the interests of learning the full educational implications of media related classroom activities. Much of the literature examining the didactic potential of different media provides insights into children's cognitive and affective reactions to these forms.

In order to provide a coherent structure for such a broad range of work, the chapter is divided into four interrelated sections, the first of which deals with the general concept of literacy, long considered one of the main foundations of all educational goals. This section examines the arguments

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for altering our definitions of literacy in order to allow for a more representative mix of symbols or coding systems and hence expand the varieties of meaning students can experience within the context of schooling. Much of the literature emphasises the potential offered through visual media and as visual literacy represents a core element of media studies work, the basis of this hypothesis is explored through the second section. Of particular interest are the possibilities for education offered through mass visual media, particularily television. Children would appear to have a 'natural' interest in television, an interest which until recently has been considered essentially leisure specific and at times a harmful distraction from the more serious business of learning. As media education involves the use of television texts as objects of study, it is important to be aware of the characteristics of the medium as an information processing task, that is, how children perceive and understand the 'language of television'.

Having explored some of the cognitive implications of using visual media in the classroom the third section adopts a socio-cultural perspective examining the wider context of education today. As the mass media have now become a major socialising force in society the arguments for an educational response in the form of media education are less disputed. Why this is so and what this implies in terms of classroom experience are discussed in this section. The final part of this chapter draws together the various strands

of the argument highlighting what at this point appear to be the major contributions offered through media studies in terms of a revised conception of education in general.

1.2 Definitions of Literacy

The most widely accepted definition of literacy is that originally developed by Unesco (1963) where it is essentially equated with basic skills in reading, writing and numeracy,

> A person is literate when he has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enable him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community and whose attainments in reading, writing and arithmetic make it possible for him to continue to use these skills towards his own and the community's development and for active participation in the life of his country.

Since this formulation researchers and theorists in the area have come to recognise the difficulties involved in trying to encapsulate this complex and varying process in definitive terms. (See for example, Graff 1982; Scribner 1984; Finnegan 1988; Sofo 1988). A degree of competency in the 3R's remains an important, indeed essential prerequisite for later learning and development. However, literacy as an educational goal has come to mean more than mechanical skills in reading and writing. Rather, it is understood to be an overarching principle in education related to the need to develop the broader intellectual life of children and adults. Literacy is the process of creating meaning and according to Sofo (1988) integrates general communication skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and computing with

cognition and understanding.

Most of the definitions of literacy presented in the literature including that provided by Unesco above, combine some common features as described by Sofo,

> Definitions of literacy should take into account a number of factors. They should be concerned with literacy both as a complex collection of learned processes and skills, and as a collection of tools useful for conceptualisation and for practical application of the skills in the meaningful daily activities of the person.
>
> (Sofo, 1988:266)

For Sofo then literacy is relative to different contexts and purposes. He goes on to argue for example that the types of competence required in a 'primitive' society are likely to differ extensively to those necessary in a technological one. Literacy is not a static construct but a process, making the generalised apprehension of experience possible, enhancing the individuals ability to function effectively in diverse contexts. Sofo's argument can be seen as part of a recent and ongoing debate surrounding the general concept of literacy and literacy development. Streets 1984 publication, Literacy in Theory and Practice provides one of the clearest accounts of the contending approaches labelling them as the 'automonous' model and the 'ideological' model. The former treats literacy as a 'neutral' technology. In other words, reading and writing are viewed as technical skills which are in the service of the individual using them. Literacy is depicted as a set of abstract skills which enable the development of certain intellectual qualities such as

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disembedded thinking and generally enhances personal autonomy and efficacy. Written language in particular, is often isolated and privileged as instrumental in the formation of intellectual skills in abstraction and rationality, (see for example, Olson (1984) and Donaldson (1984)).

However, Streets 'ideological' model recognises literacy as a set of social practices, a cultural phenomenon. As he puts it, 'the meaning of literacy depends upon the social institutions in which it is embedded' (1984:8). This line of research is well represented in the work of Labov (1969), Stubbs (1980) and others who challenge the 'autonomous' model arguing against any notion of a context-free, disembedded and universal form of language. Language, whether spoken or written is dependant on and embedded within social and sub-cultural contexts. As Mercer (1990) argues,

> The literacy practices people use in any particular set of social circumstances will reflect the sense they make of those circumstances, the way they contextualize the literacy event.

Any simplistic connection between literacy then and the implicit construction of "higher" abstracted intellectual skills is questioned as language is conceived as irretrievably linked to varying sociocultural contexts. Hence Scribner (1984) argues for recognition of multiple meanings with varieties of literacies being employed and stresses the need for greater diversity in our educational approaches.

This shift in the debate has broadened our conceptions of literacy, as discrete 'bundles' of skills to consider the possibility of a 'whole language' approach which as Jacobs (1990) tells us is based on 'the organic unity of language in its various modes'. He goes on to consider the implications of this extended concept for education in general suggesting "that there are not only alternatives within traditional literacy but also alternatives to traditional literacy ..." (p.16). That is, if we are to conceive of language in this 'wholistic' sense, the broader term of 'communication' becomes necessary as it can encompass the range of symbol systems used to encode messages and meanings.

1.2.1 Broadening the Scope

In the educational context, Jacobs argues for a wider sense of text than the purely literary, explictly referring to visual texts and the need to improve 'our credentials as media readers'. This proposition is frequently echoed by other theorists, for example Malitza (1984) who states in an essay entitled, "Learning, Understanding and Communication Media",

> Today it is increasingly recognised that meaning depends on context. The educational corollary of meaningful learning is thus to increase the number of contexts within which concepts, propositions and knowledge can evolve.
> (Malitza, 1984 : 115)

Malitza proposes that alternative modes of symbolic behaviour

available within the culture become optional contexts in educational practices. In this regard he refers to the mass media and more particularily the image, as an analogue or representational symbol, rich in context.

Eliot Eisner (1981), Professor of Education and Art, also argues that schools need to develop programmes that allow students address problems and ideas using different forms of representation. For Eisner, the forms of representation available in the culture are each 'non-redundant', the kind of meaning each provides is unique and direct translation from one form to another is impossible without some loss or alteration in meaning. He asks, for example, what can be learned about history through drama or through visual images that is not likely to be said in didactic prose or vice versa? Part of the task of education then is to provide opportunities for students to develop competence in a variety of symbolic forms, allowing diverse options for the experience of meaning in natural and cultural forms. Eisner regards literacy as the 'generic process' of being able to 'decode' or 'encode' content in any of the forms of representation made possible by the sensory systems. In restricting definitions of literacy to highly codified forms such as the three R's, he suggests schools run the risk of ignoring many alternative modes used in conceptualising, expressing and recovering meaning. In relation to the arts he states,

> The arts encourage the use of imagination and value
> productive idiosyncracy. In artistic forms of

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> representation cognitive skills different from
> those used in rule-governed forms of representation
> are cultivated, tolerance for ambiguity is
> fostered, and the ability to exercise judgement
> prized.
>
> (Eisner, 1981 : 468)

Eisner's definition of literacy then is inclusive and embraces all forms of patterned expression used in conveying thought discursive and non-discursive forms of language.

A recognition of the manifold forms of expression and understanding available to the individual would appear to be facilitated by the institutions of mass communication. Their symbolic modes of representation cover a range of our sensory systems, offering new ways of conveying meaning, while also providing channels for the mass distribution of existing cultural forms such as musical notation, visual imagery and auditory forms. Although the connection is not made by Eisner (who in fact does not look upon the popular arts in a particularily favourable light; cf. Eisner 1978, cited in Rosenblum 1981), the mass media may, according to the argument he develops, provide a particularly valuable means of broadening our vision of what is involved in human experience and communication.

In a related context, Sinatra (1986) also proposes a less prescriptive understanding of the concept of literacy and bases his definition on five separate yet interrelated modes available for social, professional, informational, emotional and aesthetic fulfillment at particular times and places.

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1. Visual literacy as primary

2. Oral literacy

3. Written literacy

4. Visual literacy as representational

5. Computer and technological literacy

Sinatra maintains that as visual literacy emanates from a non-verbal core and precedes or perhaps develops with oral literacy, it forms the basis of all later literacies. In other words it is the foundation upon which all subsequent learning is built. The work of Piaget (1963) who recognised a non-verbal core to language development and Arnheim's (1974) view of perception as actively building visual concepts are cited in support of this theory (see pg 16). Sinatra argues that as the child develops, and given appropriate opportunities, these various literacies can interact and enrich the comprehension and expression available through each mode. An argument which would tend to counter Piagetian wisdom of developmental progression.

Nevertheless, the educational system places its greatest emphasis on just one literacy, that of written literacy production, to the detriment he believes of childrens' thinking and conceptual development. Sinatra stresses the importance of completing the literacy cycle and maintains that visual literacy can play a substantive role in the development of competence in all other modes. He cites an article from Update (1984), Journal of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development which compares the

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U.S. educational system to that of Japan. In an attempt to narrow the gap between U.S. and Japanese technology and industry, American educators and school administrators increased the number of mandatory hours students spent studying science and mathematics. As a result the humanities and arts subjects suffered in terms of scheduling and investment. By contrast, the article reports the Japanese system focusses equally on the technical/scientific subjects and the arts and humanities. While American students become proficient in verbal and numerical thinking, the Japanese learn many symbol systems allowing them greater versatility in symbolic and representational modes of thinking. The mental stimulation provided by the arts and humanities proves just as important to the Japanese students success as mathematics and science.

This report would appear to confirm then what many theorists and art educators have been suggesting on the strength of recent research. An overemphasis on what have been called the basic skills of 'reading writing and arithmetic' may in fact be limiting the acquisition of valid and usable bodies of knowledge and skills. Lowenfeld (1982) goes so far as to assert that our schools have confused the tools with the objectives of education. A learning process which is still predominantly based on the 36 symbols A-Z, and 0-9 must preclude many areas central to the educative process,

> If we really expect to develop an inquiring mind in
> a child, one that is eager to tackle the problems

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> of today, a mind that is flexible, inquisitive and
> seeks for solutions in unusual ways then the
> attention that we have paid to the so-called basic
> learning areas may be ill-placed.
>
> (Lowenfeld, 1982 : 52)

Again Lowenfeld stresses the need for more varied approaches
in education with an increased emphasis on the arts as a
central component of the schools curriculum,

> It is the interaction of the symbols, the self and
> the environment that provides the material for
> abstract intellectual processes. Therefore, mental
> growth depends upon a rich and varied relationship
> between a child and his environment, such a
> relationship is a basic ingredient of a creative
> art experience.
>
> (Lowenfeld, 1982 : 6)

The proposition that cultivation of competence within a broad
range of symbolic modes can enhance the educative experience
of students is one that requires further elaboration. In
particular, the assertion that the arts or visual media could
have a significant impact on cognition and learning is
important as increasing pressure is put on schools to
intensify their programs in the scientific and technological
fields. The basis for this advocacy is found in the thesis
that each form of experience produces a unique pattern of
skills for dealing with or thinking about the world. In
terms of education, the symbol system utilised whether
mathematical, verbal, or visual would each have differential
consequences in the acquisition of skills and knowledge.
Jacobs (1990:16) for example poses the following question,

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> At the level of skills, it can be argued that while
> different media may virtually converge in terms of
> message, they diverge in terms of the skills
> required for reading the message, and the skills
> developed by reading messages of that form. Can we
> guarantee that we give ourselves or our pupils the
> opportunities for developing this wider range of
> skills?

Chapter Three explores further this socio-historical perspective and the implications it holds for media education and schooling. For the purposes of this discussion, the following provides an introduction to the concept focussing on the general notion of media and the characteristics they may embody.

1.3 Media, Symbols and the Learner

Man's interactions with the world are a mediatory process, mediated by the symbolic systems or forms of representation we devise to conceptualise and understand objective reality. Hence, Kuhn (1962), Whorf (1956) and Gombrich (1969) have each shown that scientific theory, language and art respectively are not solely contingent on the objective world but are frequently influenced by the structure of a particular cultures coding or symbol system. McLuhan (1964, 1962) speculated in a more general sense that each medium of communication produces social and psychological effects on its users quite independent of the message or content being transmitted.

Olson (1976) developed McLuhan's arguments maintaining a cultural conception of intelligence, (see also Bruner,

1966). For Olson 'what the mind can do depends on the devices provided by the culture' (p 91) rather than on any innate, biological qualities. In examining the effects of different media, Olson (1970) concludes that each medium provides peculiar sets of alternatives to choose from in order to select meaning or perform competently. Skill in a medium requires the individual to extract the correct information and process it according to the inherent attributes of the technology. Each medium then carries relatively unique information requiring specific and related mental skills in its use. In an article with Bruner (1974), Olson refers to the media of expression and communication as 'exploratory devices'. Learning to master the coding system or developing competence in its 'language' implies the extraction of 'previously undetected information' to the extent that different symbol systems require different information in their use. Following this proposition then, the development of competence in a particular symbol system could provide fresh insights on previous learning or access to entirely new domains of knowledge. Kozma (1991) provides a comprehensive review of research on learning through the different media of books, television, computers and multimedia environments and like Olson concludes that 'these media are distinguished by cognitively relevant characteristics of their technologies, symbol systems and processing capabilities' (pg 79). While he admits that some learning is common, regardless of the medium used, Kozma stresses that through the instructional methods and task

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requirements used, the specific features of each medium can enable certain cognitive operations and learning outcomes.

This leads to the question of the differential nature of information and skills made accessible through specifically visual media. The following discussion provides some insight into the characteristics of visual communication both in terms of the medium itself and our perceptions of its message. Of particular interest are childrens readings of television. A review of the research suggests that television viewing is a more active process than previously believed. Recognising and attempting to understand these processes can contribute to the development of educational programs which can extend and deepen the range of responses possible.

1.3.1 Visual Communication and Perception

> Languages are made-up systems constructed by man to
> encode, store and decode information. Therefore
> their structure has a logic that visual literacy is
> unable to parallel.
>   (Dondis, 1981 : 12)

In the words of semiotician, Christian Metz, images "yield to the receiver a quantity of indefinite information, like statements but unlike words". It has been the work of theorists such as Metz, Barthes and Eco which has perhaps contributed most to our understanding of visual communication. Drawing on the work of Saussure in structural linguistics, their work provide frameworks for analysis which

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can theorise the continuous analogical nature of the image. It is in the realm of photography, film and television where the iconicity of the imagery is at its most disarming that their work is of particular significance. Moving away from Barthes's (1977) early notion of the photograph as a "message without a code", (which, essentially assumes the photograph reproduces reality) semiotics proferred an essential axiom in insisting on the arbitrariness of all forms of visual language. The photographic image then rather than reproducing reality, mediates, constructs or abstracts from the actual.

Hence in the presence of a photograph we are confronted with a complex of indefinite messages which are reflections upon rather than reflections of the actual. In such circumstances the naive assumption that iconicity indicates transparency is redundant as is the popular belief that understanding visual communication is an obviously intuitive process. To the extent that all visual messages are coded, understanding is derived through a decoding process. This operation is based on the 'grammar' of visual language, the basic structure and impact of visual messages and is therefore an imprecise, inconsistent affair.

As Barthes (1977) Eco (1982), and others point out, the act of perception, the decoding process, is never limited to the formal features of the visual array. Perception necessarily imples interpretation, and here one enters the realm of

meaning, both personal and social.

This argument is confirmed by theories of perception as discussed by Arnheim (1969, 1974) and Gombrich (1969) as an inherently active and dynamic process. For meaning resides not only in the cumulative effects of the elements of an artefact or object but also in the perceptual mechanism deployed in its comprehension. Our 'reading' of visual imagery is never a passive affair, there is no 'innocent eye' or 'neutral percept'. Our perceptual processes are not simply a given biological facility but are profoundly shaped and modified through cultural conditioning and environmental expectations. Gombrich states that "the world never presents a neutral picture to us; to become aware of it means to become aware of possible situations that we can try out and test for their validity" (1969 : 275) a process which generally operates below the level of consciousness.

The Gestalt school of psychology, which studies human perception of form and pattern has produced a growing body of experimental evidence to show how the brain modifies visual data, by recognising its tendency to organise irregular shapes into meaningful patterns. The mechanisms of visual perception, the eye and along with it the human brain, search for a 'best-fit' resolution or closure in the sensory data it views. Rudolf Arnheim (1974) in his book <u>Art and Visual Perception</u> has applied much of Gestalt theory to the interpretation of the visual arts. He explores how the workings of perception combines elements of pictorial

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stimuli into organised and complete visual units. He concludes that perception is in essence 'a creative activity of the human mind. Perceiving accomplishes at the sensory level what in the realm of reasoning is known as understanding" (Arnheim, 1974 : 46). Elsewhere Arnheim (1969) has developed this argument by attacking the distinction which is commonly made between perception and thinking. Common sense or 'Popular philosophy' considers the role of perception as mere data collection, while concept formation, the accumulation of knowledge, reasoning, connecting and inferring, are carried out by 'higher' cognitive functions of the mind. Arnheim refutes this position referring to it as an 'unwholesome split which cripples the training of reasoning power" (1969 : 3)

> My contention is that the cognitive operations called thinking are not the privilege of mental processes above and beyond perception but the essential ingredients of perception itself. I am referring to such operations as active explorations, selection, grasping of essentials, simplification, abstraction, analysis and synthesis, completion, correction, comparison, problem-solving as well as combining separating and putting in context.
>
> (Arnheim, 1969 : 13)

All of these activities Arnheim claims are carried out by the perceptual mechanisms laying the groundwork for concept formation. Direct perceptual stimuli are organised and reorganised through interaction with stored experience ('norm images') developing a system of visual concepts by which we understand and make sense of experience.

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Returning to the realm of the media, Arnheim echoes Metz suggesting that a 'visual education must be based on the premise that every picture is a statement. The picture does not present the object itself but a set of propositions about the object; or, if you prefer, it presents the object as a set of propositions' (Arnheim, 1969 : 308). The role of language is to help stabilise and organise the percepts (and here Arnheim is referring both to pictorial comprehension and the general apprehension of experience). Becker (1978) cites Pryluck (1973) who also suggests that content works differently for pictorial and verbal stimuli. Visual communication is 'structurally inductive' while language is 'structurally deductive' leading us to generalise the pictorial stimulus but to particularise the verbal. Pryluck makes the point that contextual factors such as sequencing and juxtaposition are of particular importance in pictorial communication as relational devices between picture ideas do not exist as they do for language. Verbal relational devices delineate how a message is to be understood, how ideas are to be related and coordinated in the construction of meaning. With either single or multiple arranged images understanding of the visual input must be inferred from the pictorial information presented; relationships between ideas are implicit rather than explicit. This can be seen for example in the phenomenon of 'third effect' which is a function of montage in the photographic production of meaning. (Hence Sinatra (1986) recommends the use of visual compositions in

the development of written literacy and the thinking mode of synthesis).

Such hypotheses would appear to describe an exploratory function in relation to pictorial stimuli. The inherent ambiguity of the visual medium would appear to ensure its effectiveness as a vehicle for inquiry, for without some degree of uncertainty , inquiry can be only limited.

Arnheim proposes that visual images must be construed as texts that require questioning and analysis before meaning is rendered. Such activities occur within the realm of the image itself, as intelligent understanding is derived from the unity of perception and conception. And to the extent that visual messages are interpreted as polysemic or 'loaded' texts, the inferences which may be drawn in the construction of meaning must then be multiple and varied.

1.3.2 Tele-Visual Communication as an Information Processing Task

In opposition to the above argument is the popular case made against television. The visual arts (in the form of painting and photography), many would agree, can make some sophisticated demands of its audience requiring the investment of some intellectual skills. Television, on the other hand would not be included in this category. The television medium is considered to be explicit in terms of action, rendering meaning transparent and reducing the degree of processing required in comprehension. (It is also

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significant that although television is a predominantly visual medium, verbal language plays a vital role in 'anchoring' and specifying meaning (Barthes 1977)). Such theories of television viewing consider visual attention (particularily that of children) as primarily reactive and controlled by the television set. (e.g. Singer, 1981 ; Winn 1977; Mander 1978; Postman 1979). It is considered an essentially passive activity as the rapid, constantly changing nature of visual input inhibits comprehension processes to following routinely the stimulation provided.

Salomon (1979, 1983) while less extreme in his views argues that television's symbolic code allows shallower processing than the verbal. As the non-notational system of television is perceived as depicting life-like messages and therefore as an 'easy' medium, children may invest little mental energy (AIME) in it. As a result, Salomon maintains, children learn less from it than they otherwise could.

An interesting theory offered by Salomon (1983) suggests that cognitive activity or mental effort may decline as children develop and become more experienced viewers. Television viewing requires the active engagement of mental resources by the younger viewer in order to extract meaning from the interrelated set of verbal and visual signs. However, the viewing strategy adopted by older children and adults, may exclude deep processing, allowing less cognitive activity as they become more familiar with the visual syntax of

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television.

This hypothesis coincides with more recent research which refutes the case made by the reactive theory of television viewing. Rather than simply responding reflexively to the features of the medium, the viewer has recourse to internal systems of schemas or structures of thought which guide their various information processing activities. Anderson and Lorch state,

> ....based on his or her experience with the medium, familiarity with the specific program, level of cognitive development and general world knowledge, the viewer applies viewing strategies more or less appropriate to the program and viewing environment

> (Anderson and Lorch, 1983 : 9)

Similarily, Dorr (1986) describes the viewing context as an inherently active process influenced by the viewers efforts to understand the television program. These efforts are guided by schema which provide an 'internal structure for the selection and storage of content, generate expectations about that content, influence recollections of that content and develop and change according to experience' (pg 31). Dorr continues by identifying three processes employed in the construction of meaning from television, information processing, interpretive and evaluative activities. Information processing refers to the extraction of concrete or literal meaning while interpretive activities involve integrating this material, drawing inferences about content or characters that are implied and attributing feelings and

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motives to both the characters of the program and its creators. The third procedure, evaluation, depends to some degree on the information processing and interpretive reading of program content and refers to the positive or negative valences attached to characters, actions and motives. These activities, according to Dorr, "are at once independent and inter-dependent, operating simultaneously and sequentially in an intertwined pattern that can be complex and challenging for even the most sophisticated and skilled viewer" (40).

Meringoff (1980) in a study designed to investigate medium based differences in learning and cognition provides some insight into how interpretive activities might operate in extracting meaning from tele-visual messages. Two groups of children of primary school age (six to ten year olds) were exposed to an identical narrative, one presented through an animated television program the other by a narrator using an illustrated text. Results indicated that children who were read to had better recall of the language used and based their inferences on the words of the text while those in the visual condition recalled more actions and relied on visual content in interpreting the meaning of the story. In describing events their use of vocabulary was often more vivid or descriptive than that provided in the text. Basing their interpretations of meaning on visual memory their understanding of the action was more explicit (as condemned by 'reactive' theorists) but not defined or confined by the authors vocabulary. For example, one sequence in the text

read, "Ananse poured some water over his head". In recalling this event those children exposed visually to the action used alternative vivid constructions such as 'sprinkled' or 'shaked'. Baggett (1989 : cited in Kozma, 1991) would contend that this occurs due to the surplus or 'bushier' nature of visual representations i.e. mental representations derived from pictorial stimuli contain more information about the event, act, object, etc., and are richer in terms of possible associative connections with longterm memory.

These findings are consistent with the earlier discussion of images as ambiguous texts and Arnheim's theory of perception as co-existant with cognition. In one sense moving images do reduce ambiguity in underlining manifest meaning and making action explicit. Relational devices in this context do exist as children develop competence in the cinematic 'syntax' of television montage and language can anchor, clarify and relay meaning. (Although as shown in the above study and elsewhere visual input appears to be the primary carrier of meaning, Crowell, 1981; Hodge and Tripp 1987). Yet, specificity is still lacking in this medium. The mental product of the act of perception is still in the realm of imagery until stabilised by the use of verbal descriptors. The ambiguous nature of moving images still lies in the act of interpretation or negotiation of personal meaning - not perhaps in explicating what is occuring but more in interpreting how and as we shall see why it occurs. It is the personal knowledge and experience that the child brings

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to the viewing context which determines or guides the range of possible meanings available to them.

In a later study, Meringinoff et al (1983) shows how the codes of television can convey significant details of a narrative while also encouraging children to become more creative in their own pictorial representations. Again two groups of children were separately exposed to a story through the media of television and narration. The text was the Grimm fairytale, The Fisherman and his Wife, which basically concerns an avaricious woman and her dissatisfaction with all that life offers. When asked to draw a picture of this woman as she makes a final grandiose wish from a magical fish, the children to whom the story was read tended to depict her as happy and contented. Such an interpretation it is argued, is inconsistent with the total personality of the character as she is portrayed in the story. The children who had viewed the narrative were more likely to represent her as angry or discontented and use close ups (rather than full lengths as in the former more standard drawings) to highlight the character's emotion. Choat and Griffin (1986) in a similar study concluded that those children who viewed a narrative and received preparation and appropriate follow on activities generated more detailed understanding of plot and showed an improved capacity to apply this understanding to similar issues beyond the confines of the study.

Hodge and Tripp (1988) in a more recent study, examined childrens responses to a television cartoon. Drawing on the

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theory and research methods of various disciplines such as semiotics, psychology, anthropology and literary critism, they have shown that the cartoon ('the bete noir of lobby groups') provides the child viewer with ample opportunities to exercise their developing cognitive and social skills. How meaning is produced through aural and visual codes is first analysed using the principles of semiotic theory. What becomes apparent is the rich repertoire of potential meanings carried by the different forms of structure in a programme. To elucidate the process of decoding these messages is recognised as problematic as of course this takes place outside of view and as Hodge and Tripp point out sometimes outside of consciousness. However, using a developmental perspective it has been possible to trace the stages of cognitive growth from Piagets pre-operational to formal operations and map the influence each of these stages exerts on the tele-viewing context. Like Dorr (1986), Anderson and Lorch (1983) and others, Hodge and Tripp have based their research on a developmental model, recognising that childrens ways of thinking may be qualitatively different at different stages of growth. (1) They have also developed on this approach by incorporating the theories and principles of semiotics into their analysis of childrens responses to the media.

Essentially they found that children use television to think with, this process being directly dependent on the level of competence persisting. For example, younger children, bring

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a paradigmatic facility to operate on their tele-viewing. Their conception of the television message differs from that of older children in that the constituent elements of the text are primary with only a limited awareness of syntagmatic structures, or the relations between elements. Older children (9-12) have gradually developed more complex paradigmatic and syntagmatic structures which lead to a facility for transformational understanding and a greater capacity for intellectual, intervention, criticism, extrapolation and deduction. By this age, many children gravitate toward adult programming to satisfy their viewing needs.

Hodge and Tripp make the point that the development of the transformational facility is crucial in the nine to twelve age group, however "for transformations to become power for the viewer there must also be time and scope for them to develop - opportunities in school or at home for various operations to be tried out," (p.92). These opportunities however are not provided as often as they could be particularily in the context of schooling. As mentioned earlier, Salomon (1983) has suggested there is a decline in cognitive activity as children become more familiar with the symbol system and visual syntax of the television medium. This decline then might be conceived as coinciding with the development of a degree of competence in transformational operations. As these skills are not cultivated either at home or at school, television becomes an 'easy' medium, and its

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potential in contributing to the growth of these cognitive capacities is never exploited.

As the research reviewed here indicates, television viewing is not a passive, mindless activity but an information processing task that can yield significant learning if used in an appropriate context. Hodge and Tripp's study demonstrates that children can critically engage with material, revealing an awareness of genre, recognition of modality and the moral differences between heroes and villans. Elsewhere studies have shown that in recalling content, children must reflect on actions stored in visual memory, often encouraging divergent and creative use of language in 'anchoring' their interpretation of events. The television medium also appears to facilitate childrens understanding of more subtle yet significant features of narratives such as the motivations, intentions and emotions of characters and how these impinge on plot development. Nevertheless it is important to recognise that in each case cited, as indeed in most research that attempts to examine such implicit processes, activities or tasks related to viewing were required of children. Without such intervention, the visual medium's capacity as an educative tool can remain latent and concealed. As one boy quoted in Hodge and Tripp put it,

> You don't really think about it if you aren't asked. If you aren't asked, you don't think about it again
>
> (Hodge and Tripp, 1988 : 66)

The introduction of specific tasks to be accomplished encourage children to reflect on and extrapolate from the visual stimulation provided through this medium, taking advantage of its unique symbolic forms to cultivate skills of expression, interpretation, deduction and criticism. As Kozma (1991) earlier pointed out, it is through instructional method and task requirements that advantage can be taken of a medium's cognitively relevant capabilities. Hodge and Tripp also stress the need for discussion about television in freeing its meanings for children for use in the broader context of experience,

> Discourse about television is itself a social force. It is a major site of the mediation of television meanings, a site where television meanings fuse with other meanings into a new text to form a major interface with the world of action and belief
> (Hodge and Tripp, 1988 : 143)

1.4 "Meanings in Action"

Up to this point, visual media have been discussed primarily in terms of their intrinsic nature and the character of response required in extracting meaning. Yet to the extent that we share a common culture, we also also share similar sets of tools for interpreting these signals allowing some consensuality in the types of meaning constructed. As contemporary society moves more toward a predominantly image-centred culture, visual media then are fast becoming a powerful social force, mediating our perceptions of the world and of ourselves. If, as Arnheim (1969) has argued,

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perception creates the world of the perceiver, can not the media then also impose their own modes of perception on us, influencing our awareness of the nature of our environment and our relationship to that environment in fundamental ways?

A defining characteristic of modern society is the degree to which visual media are used as mass purveyors of information. Images are now ubiquitous and are no longer confined to art galleries, museums or the homes of the upper classes: they are encountered daily whether on food packaging, billboards, magazines or the incessant stream of images available from television. As Nadaner (1985) put it,

> Instead of simply being available to the interested observer, images are a compelling social force, cultural objects that seem like a natural part of social reality.
>
> (Nadaner, 1985 : 10)

Nadaner maintains 'they carry conviction' in that the photograph bears an iconic relationship to a real visual array concealing the complex processes involved in its production. In this regard Sontag (1977) notes,

> The powers of photography have in effect de-platonized our understanding of reality, making it less and less plausible to reflect upon our experience according to the distinction between images and things, between copies and originals.
>
> (Sontag 1977 : 179)

Along with Barthes (1981), Sontag argues that contemporary thinking as well as contemporary culture has become dominated by mass produced images. To the extent that manifest meaning is explicit and widely accessible through modern visual media, the construction of common or shared meanings

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throughout a culture becomes possible. And if we accept the general definition of culture as a system of shared meanings and values expressed through symbolic forms, mass visual media might then be seen as a public resource of stock symbols, providing standards for attitudes, values and behaviour.

Panofsky (1967) referred to the movies "as the single greatest force in molding the opinions, the taste, the language, the dress, the behaviour and even the physical appearance of a public comprising more than 60 per cent of the population of the earth" (p. 16). More recent work on popular culture has broadened this statement to include television and the mass media in general. Both Gerbner (1981) from the United States and Dyer (1985) from Great Britain, emphasize the role of television as a powerful socializing force taking to itself the major part of the enculturation of children. Such a perspective invites serious concern about the ideological discourses perpetuated through the mass media, as there are always dominant meanings preferred by those who hold power over the forms of communication. The continuing social prevalence of a dominant ideology, it is argued, indicates that 'readers' are relatively passive and subject to the preferred meanings inscribed in texts. Ferguson (1980) argued that children's programming "inhabits an established universe of discourse" which is largely conservative and operates within the framework of middle-class values and beliefs. Various

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studies have exposed the persistence of specific biases and imbalances in the media's portrayal of certain groups. Women and girls for example are consistently underrepresented and generally occupy the more traditional sex role of nurturers, carers and passive followers, (Durkin, 1985). Stereotypical images of black people are also common depicting them as poor powerless and often deviant as compared with whites who are invariably more powerful figures, leaders, heroes and problem solvers, (Greenfield, 1984).

While there is clearly a basis for this argument, it fails to take account of the range of strategies for resistance deployed within a culture. These might take the form of overt or conscious action on the part of groups or individuals to redefine their position or image in contradiction to the publicized 'concensus'. Or there is also a more generalized and implicit resistance, as Hodge and Tripp put it,

> ...ideological effects cannot be simply read off from ideological forms analysed in isolation from the cognitive and social process that consitute them.
>
> (Hodge and Tripp, 1987 : 99)

As our discussion earlier has indicated, the individual deploys their own interpretive framework in the extraction of meaning, and the strategies used are dependant on the broader context of cognitive and social experience and knowledge. In other words there is a dynamic operating within the sphere of 'lived culture' a continuous process of negotiation between the various discourses encountered. Fiske and Hartley (1978) use the distinction found in scientific

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literature between 'experienced meanings' and 'mediated
meanings' in identifying the interactive nature of
socialization and the reciprocal interchange which occurs
between discourses. 'Experienced meanings' are the results
of direct personal intercourse with 'objective reality' and
are generated primarily through conversation and one would
also have to add personal action. Mediated meanings on the
other hand, are derived from sources outside of ourselves
such as teachers, parents and of course television and the
mass media. In these instances, they argue, personal
understanding is achieved 'by translating mediated into
experienced meanings' (p.139). To illustrate this thesis,
Hartman and Husband's (1973) work on racial conflict and the
media is cited. Their conclusions would indicate that
children with less direct personal experience with racial
minorities tended to rely on the mass media for their
information about this group. Their understanding of race
relations issues is therefore skewed to coincide with that of
the media where conflict situations are prone to be
highlighted more frequently. Those living in 'high' contact
areas were able to modify the media's messages on the basis
of their own local experience, providing them with a less
partial or prejudicial understanding. The conclusions drawn
from this work imply that when 'mediated meanings' contradict
'experienced meanings', a form of negotiation can occur in
resolving this conflict. In the absence of direct personal
experience however, 'mediated meanings' can be important in
structuring the ways in which we think about and perceive the

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world of experience.

> ... our subjective reality is not a given object
> which is unaffected by the meanings it encounters.
> On the contrary, it is itself a product of its
> relationship with them.

<div align="right">(Fiske and Hartley, 1978 : 140)</div>

As a result of this process, Newcomb (1981) argues we should look for 'meanings in action' when considering the relationship between the individual and their media environment. Similarily, our definition of culture in general has been reworked to incorporate this view of a kind of dynamic forum where meaning is a more complex process of interpretation and renegotiation. In his book, <u>Actual Minds, Possible Worlds</u> (1986) Bruner asks, "how the negotiation of meaning as socially arrived at is to be interpreted as a pedagogical axiom?" (p.124). A plausible response to the question might then be through an education based on the most common, publicly available stock of symbols within the culture. Studying the mass media, where many of the culture's shared meanings and values are discussed and negotiated would imply an education based on criticism and reflection of the pervading culture itself. Such an education provides opportunities for "socially relevant" and "meaningful learning" in that children are encouraged to re-investigate 'mediated meanings' translating them into 'experienced meanings' through a process of criticism, analysis and reflection. In relation to such a course of study, Nadaner (1985) states,

Criticism begins with an analysis of the object but
ends with an understanding of personal
experiences, values and social attitudes.

(Nadaner, 1985 : 12)

1.5 A Way to Teach: A Way to Learn

This chapter has considered a broad range of work in an
attempt to begin identifying some of the pedagogical
implications of integrating media related work into the
classroom. While the subject area of media education is
recognised as teaching about the mass media it involves a
more significant change in the educational experience of the
child than merely a new subject on the curriculum.
Introducing the mass media into the classroom, with its
inevitable emphasis on visual forms of communication would
appear to offer the potential for some radical changes in the
ways we teach and consequently in the ways children are
taught to learn. Visual communication now vies with the
verbal and print media as one of the central symbol systems
through which society communicates. As such, visual literacy
becomes a practical concern for all educators regardless of
specialism. The popular phrase, 'every teacher is a reading
teacher' takes on a new meaning but retains its relevance.

The research reviewed in this chapter has explored the nature
of visual forms revealing some of the characteristics of this
medium as a symbol system or 'language' of communication.
What has become clear is this medium offers a context for
education which differs essentially from print and verbal

means. Visual language has its own unique vocabulary of expression composed through the manipulation of visual techniques and forms. Their structure has a logic which encodes meaning in ways that require alternative strategies and skills for understanding. Visual texts are rich in associative meanings and broad in definitions inviting speculation, exploration, hypothesis formation and deduction. Their compositional complexity and conversely their apparent naturalness and simplicity are two of the features which make such learning possible. By an early age children have become accustomed to visually constructed messages, this familiarity and ease of recognition allows them to move beyond basic comprehension (when it is required of them) to more sophisticated levels of interpretation and evaluation. The studies reviewed in this chapter for example have shown that through instructional method children's ability and willingness to engage in a more critical sense with television texts has been enhanced and developed.

It is these texts, television programmes, films, advertisements even newspapers (where questions of design and layout are now crucial) that form an integral part of media studies programmes. Their language is primarily visual but their meanings are of course social. While the medium enables certain 'cognitively relevant capabilities', it is the socio-cultural contexts of these readings which is the subject of education. There has been a tendency, particularily prevalent in the United States, to concentrate

on programmes which teach children to 'read' and manipulate images ignoring for the most part questions of meaning and the cultural domain. The significance of the visual media to education lies both in its form and content. Concentrating on the technology alone, perhaps as a resource for creative self-expression, is a limiting exercise which ultimatly fails to recognise the image-centered culture in which we now live. Visual literacy as a component of media studies is concerned with the cultural reading of images recognising that meaning does not exist in a vacuum but is dependant on the socio-cultural context. This approach to education then begins from the premise that all meaning is negotiated and rendered in a multiplicity of ways, defined by age, gender, race and class position. Conventional notions of teaching or the 'transmission of knowledge' are clearly unsuited for such learning as students' knowledge and understandings become central to the pedagogy. The possibility of a more transactional approach to teaching is offered which essentially asks students (and teachers) to re-examine this knowledge discovering how they interpret meaning in diverse forms. Rather than accepting the information, ideas and values that are inscribed in media texts, students are asked to critically assess these meanings, questioning their sources and means of representation. This is a joint, collaborative exercise, releasing students and teachers from their prescribed roles, democratising the learning process and more philosophically perhaps, the realm of knowledge.

This describes a recognisably 'progressive' pedagogy which is in theory available to all teachers. The mass media have become one of our most important sources of information on a variety of topics covering the range of curriculum areas. Adding to this the existing use of instructional media in the class, the opportunities for engaging in media studies practice becomes extensive.

Chapter Three explores further the impact media studies can have in the educational experience of primary aged students. Beginning from the child as learner and the educational practices we have devised to teach her, this chapter critically examines the contributions media studies can offer to the curriculum. Recent theories of learning and development which are explored more fully in this chapter tend to support or substantiate the 'ideological' model for literacy discussed earlier. These theories adopt a constructivist perspective in looking at how children learn to think and learn, stressing the role of the social and cultural domains as regulating agencies in their development. Communication and interaction are increasingly considered central to the educational enterprise with decontextualized, abstracted systems of learning becoming just one of a range of intellectual strategies which schools should be valuing. Prior to this, an examination of the current status and practice of media studies on the primary curricula of neighbouring European countries will be described. As the continent of Europe moves toward greater economic and social

unification, the educational policies and practices of each country will come under closer scrutiny and may have a significant impact on internal innovations and policy decisions.

Footnote

(1)   While the Piagetian stages of development can provide a working framework for both teachers and researchers, Chapter   Three raises questions about their reliability as a measure   of intellectual abilities and their widespread adoption in informing primary practice.

CHAPTER 2

EUROPEAN TRENDS IN PRIMARY MEDIA EDUCATION

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has provided some insight into the nature of visual communication and in particular the mass medium of television, highlighting the possibilities offered through these media in the context of schooling in general. This approach is based on the assumption that the current media ecology has profound implications for teaching and learning, drawing the study and practice of communication in all forms to the centre of curriculum objectives. The development of media education as a curricular concern however, has its origins in a more conservative school of thought, one derived from a distrust of the mass media and a concern to provide children with a 'counterbalance' to its adverse influence. This early popular conception of media education, while fortuitous in one way in creating a climate for further, more fruitful development, also served to obscure for some years the potential educational contribution of the new and popular mass media.

By the early 1980's moralistic approaches to the media had been largely revised and those schools and colleges providing media-related syllabuses moved to more functional, positivistic interpretations. The picture which emerged

tended to describe a discipline mainly suited for secondary and university level students with often added advice to 'simplify' concepts for primary work. In most cases this is an acceptable and viable route to introducing primary media studies into the classroom. Yet at the same time such an approach often precludes recognition of the unique character and needs of the younger learner and inadvertently avoids taking full advantage of the potentialities offered for the broader intellectual development of primary aged students. More recent, ongoing work from theorists directly involved or concerned with the formative years of schooling has begun to articulate a clearer more defined rationale for introducing media studies at this level within the broader framework of communication education. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an insight into some of this work as it is translated into practice in some selected European countries. The wider context of media education will first be discussed outlining the general trends, themes and approaches which broadly characterise the subject cross-culturally, providing an over-view of the customary or standard conceptualisation of the subject.

2.2 Recent Trends

Despite the fact that the content and goals of media education have altered substantially through the last decade, the early normative emphasis on tastes and values is still prevalent among many teachers and educationalists. The

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popular works of Postman (1979, 1981) and Winn (1977) referred to in the previous chapter as well as the critiques developed by art theorists such as Eisner (1978) testify to the prevailing currency of this approach in many circles. At a Council of Europe seminar on 'Mass Media Education in Primary Schools', Pierre Lespine (1987), noted that the underlying rationale for media studies courses in several countries is 'the desire for cultural compensation', a compensatory form of education designed to protect the child from the worst excesses of their media environment. Lespine goes on to say, that this generally occurs in instances of practice rather than as an element of policy governing official programmes. While the accuracy of this statement will be tested to some degree in the proceeding reviews of individual cases, a difficulty arises in penetrating the gulf which frequently exists between stated, official didactic principles and their translation into the reality of the classroom. A more recent publication by the Council of Europe would tend to describe a more optimistic view of the state of media studies in European schools.

Len Masterman's booklet entitled The Development of Media Education in Europe in the 1980's, written for the Council in 1988, draws on the experience and information provided by hundreds of European teachers and educationalists at conferences and seminars over the past decade While recognizing the persistence of 'paternalistic' or 'inoculatory' approaches, Masterman's work (which

ostensibly covers both the secondary and primary sectors) would suggest that the mainstream of European thought and practice has moved well beyond questions of cultural protectionism and the inoculation of values and tastes towards more investigative approaches to understanding the media. A key element in this development has been a reconsideration of the notion of value in understanding media texts and institutions. As Masterman put it, the value question has become, unquestionably, a transitive one; "Value for whom? Value according to what criteria of thought and judgement? Value for what strategic purposes?" (p9) The implications of this transformation for the educational methodology were extensive. In dealing with popular culture, it was the students responses and ideas which became of central importance, while the role of the teacher became that of co-investigator or colleague rather than the dominating source for information and knowledge. The teacher-pupil relationship was transformed as both parties were equally familiar with classroom texts, and learning proceeded from group activities rather than the traditional hierarchical mode, as the group retains a wider range of cultural perceptions and experiences to draw on. The development of a critical autonomy, the confidence to formulate and express responses to media products and processes became a major impulse behind syllabus design and objectives.

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This discovery oriented perspective, Masterman argues, has been further refined in more recent years to include the popular notion of the 'empowerment' of learners through education. Part of the rationale underlying many successful media studies programmes became their potentially 'liberating' nature in developing a critically informed citizenry capable of abstracting themselves from their information environment, gaining a certain mastery over these influences and maintaining their capacity for choice and independent judgement. The burgeoning growth in the manufacture and management of information stemming from commercial organisations as well as governments, special interest groups and various kinds of institutions was the context in which this movement in media education was formed. Masterman states,

> Media education can empower its learners and greatly strengthen the democratic structures of the society it serves by challenging the "naturalness" of media images, by foregrounding questions of representation, and examining the democratic structure of broadcasting institutions and raising questions of human rights in relation to communication

(Masterman, 1988:10)

This general objective is also echoed within the aims of primary media education as articulated by working groups comprised of representatives from the various countries of Belgium, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Spain, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and Sweden. In each of these reports published in the 1987, Council of Europe document (already cited), this long term objective is variously

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recorded, the most concise formulation perhaps being, "to enable the child to become a free citizen, a useful member of society and an informed consumer' (p 21). (1)

Ideally then, media education aspires to be a life-long process, the critical skills developed during schooling must be continually practiced throughout adult life if the full potentialities of the subject are to be realised. In their efforts to accomplish this objective European teachers and educationalists have recognised the need to reformulate course content, pedagogical styles and methods of evaluation. The motivational nature of the materials used, practical assignments and classroom ethos become crucial in ensuring students openness and willingness to continue learning about media products and processes in later life. Rather than being merely a fortunate characteristic of the subject, media studies' motivational qualities are a central concern and must be nurtured and guarded against the often involuntary tendency to approach (practices) in the same pedantic way common in more traditional subjects.

A further implication is found in the nature of the concepts which are dealt with, in that consideration must be given to general principles drawn from particular instances or issues under investigation. The development of general frameworks of analysis allows the student greater flexibility when similar texts or issues are encountered, perhaps outside the context of the classroom. In terms of evaluative procedures,

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Masterman notes that the trend is refreshingly novel as teachers are less concerned with 'what students know but (with) how they respond in situations, where they do not know the answer'. He continues, 'it is worth emphasising how seldom we expect this of school pupils in our teaching of most subjects' (p 13).

The content of media studies programmes can vary considerably both within and, more conspicuously, between different countries. Masterman nonetheless would claim that some measure of agreement has now been reached, systematising the subject into a coherent and intellectually rigorous discipline, with recognisable continuities across cultures. He identifies what has become a first principle of media education, namely the 'principle of non-transparency' which states that all media texts are not just representations but mediations of the real world: 'they are involved, that is, in a process of constructing or representing reality rather than simply tranmitting or reflecting it' (p 15). Masterman continues to outline four central and largely commmon areas of investigation which emerge from an understanding of this basic principle: (a) media rhetoric or the visual, verbal and aural codes which interact in the production of meaning, (b) the origins and sources of media representations, (c) ideology and (d) audience. (The theoretical basis of some of these areas has already been discussed in sections 1.3 and 1.4 in exploring the various ways in which media operate as channels of communication).

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In his introductory remarks, Masterman outlines the parameters of his work by acknowledging the generalised and at times tentative nature of the review he provides. Hence, his work is essentially non-critical and indiscriminative of the diffuse and diverse cultural practices which have evolved within the European 'media education movement'. What he does provide is a clear, concise and convenient account of some of the guiding principles which underly media education, synthesized from the work of European educationalists and teachers. Yet to what extent these can be accepted as representative of widespread practice remains unclear. The description rendered on the whole, reads as a policy document giving little indication of levels of implementation for example. While evidently a valuable document in itself, it runs the risk of masking the real state of affairs persisting within individual countries, particularily when one considers the specific context of the primary sector.

At the moment media education plays no large role in the curricula of most European primary schools. This situation, however, appears currently to be in transition as some government ministries are increasingly showing interest in supporting more sustained innovation in this area. A resolution accepted by the 1989, Conference of European Ministers of Education of the Council of Europe in Istanbul may have contributed to this movement. While reflecting the broad outline or definition Masterman provides in his review, the resolution also explicitly refers to the formative years

of education stating,

> Given the major role that media such as tele-
> vision, the cinema, radio and the press play in
> childrens cultural experience, media education
> should begin as early as possible and continue
> throughout compulsory schooling.
>
> (Cited in Drucsay and Zuna-Kratky 1991:57)

In a report entitled Innovation in Primary Education (1988),
the Council for Cultural Co-operation similarily recommend
the inclusion of media education at this level. This they
see as a priority for all European educational systems.

As policy now stands in many countries, initiatives are still
largely idiosyncratic and unsupported by any coherent
official documentation or guidelines. For the most part,
educationalists and authorities are involved in the initial
stages of tackling the principal problems which arise when
instituting curriculum change : designing appropriate
curricula and establishing the pedagogical method, providing
adequate training and resources and generally combatting
institutional inertia. At the secondary and tertiary levels
these barriers have been largely overcome in many European
countries. The relative neglect of the primary sector for
most of the 80's has left it with more ground to cover before
any semblance of a system-wide strategy could be claimed.

The following discussion provides a brief overview of the
general historical context and more recent developments in
the primary sectors of five European countries; France,

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Italy, the Netherlands, Austria and Great Britain. While the following chapter takes up the specifically Irish context, some background information is introduced here for the purposes of comparison. These five European countries have been selected as representative of the general movement of pedagogical thought in this field and provide some interesting and promising examples of some of the experiments and projects which have been initiated. These initiatives which have rapidly multiplied in the last three years are being used to inform proposals concerning the establishment of comprehensive media programmes capable of reaching all children in the 5 to 12 age bracket.

2.3   Cross Cultural Initiatives in Primary Media Education

2.3.1   France

The historical background to the study of the media in France is extensive. The work of theoreticians, Christian Metz, Roland Barthes and Guy Gauthier have contributed extensively to the field, while a broad range of journals and periodicals are available providing an intellectual forum for theoretical debate and dialogue, (e.g. Cahiers du Cinema and Communications) Perhaps more influential than this is the long tradition in film education which persists in France originating in the cine-clubs or film societies of the 1920's and 30's, establishing the climate for the later development of interest in mass media generally, (Bennett, 1977). Initially emphasis was solely on cinema education and from

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the 1950's and 60's many universitys extended their programme
of studies to offer courses in film theory and the language
of cinema to students of all faculties. As early as 1952,
the OCIC (Office Catholique International du Cinema)
recognised film education as a scholastic discipline suitable
for the secondary curriculum and in the same year the subject
became available in private schools in the St. Etienne and
surrounding regions, (Vallet, 1989). By the mid 1960's a
number of educational organisations became interested in the
wider context of media teaching and courses in television,
the press and advertising sprang up in several schools.
These were mainly private institutions where greater automony
was enjoyed in deciding curricula than in the centralised
state system. A law passed in 1973 however, changed this by
extending the mandatory school hours by 10%, allowing this
extra time to be utilised at the schools discretion. A
corollary to this law essentially recommended that media
education be allocated some of these extra hours, citing the
positive results obtained by the CRDP of Bordeaux (Centre de
Recherche et de Documentation Pedagogiques) and stipulating
that teachers be trained in the methods and practices
developed by this body. The CRDP is a regional educational
body which carries out research, provides information and
training and publishes documents and materials for use by
the teaching community. In terms of media education they
adopt a cultural approach, basing analyses of media texts on
"a reflexion on the cultural codes employed in transmitting
it, the purposes of the one transmitting it and the

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circumstances conditioning its reception", (Bennett, 1977:17). Emphasis is also placed on practical activities allowing students opportunities to produce their own audio-visual documents.

In short, media education, at least at the secondary level has been operating under official sanction for almost 20 years based on some sound theoretical principles and pedagogical methods. Nontheless, it is not a prescribed subject and a 1981 survey conducted by Josette Sultan and Jen-Paul Satre suggested that many teachers still held ambivalent and contradictory attitudes toward media education, questioning the need for any such modification of the traditional education process. (An indication of the gap previously referred to which can exist between policy and practice).

At the elementary level, the Ministry of Education has acknowledged the existence and the influence of the media since 1972. Paradoxically, the statement which was issued bore no resemblance in its tone to the official programme endorsed for secondary education the following year. The document which was entitled, Official Instructions for the Teaching of French in Elementary School (4 December 1974), states,

> The pupils of today, whilst better provided for, are yet more deprived than their ancestors, and they come under the influence that the cinema, radio, television, records, advertising and comic strips exercise over them. The school must profit from the

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> contribution of these means of communication
> and at the same time sharpen the perception of
> these pupils who are faced with the attractions
> and the coercions to which they expose them.

(cited in Vallet, 1989:220)

This 1974 position appears more broadly reflective of the dominant conception of media education at this time, as outlined earlier. Education by the media (i.e. their use as a means of instruction) is recognised as is the need for the development of critical and discriminative faculties among children to protect them from its influence. This dichotomy in approaching the different stages of education is somewhat difficult to reconcile and may merely be symptomatic of the tentative or uncertain climate surrounding the subject at this time. In 1985, the position of media education in the primary curriculum was seriously curtailed in a notably reactionary publication from the National Minister of Education, then M. Jean Pierre Chevenment. Vallet (1989) refers to the text as 'conservative, even retrograde' and 'a return to papas schooldays'. Nonetheless, initiatives still continue at this level and it is the work of Antoine Vallet himself and his colleagues at the Institut du Langage Total at the Catholic University at Lyons which as provided the most promising and persevering example of this.

As early as 1962, 'Langage Total', then called 'Film et Jeunesse' were actively calling for a new method in media education based on a wider concept of human communications experience. Since then the theory has been refined and

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developed and is practiced in many regions in France as well as several other countries; Vallet (1989) notes in particular, Spain, Belgium, the countries of Latin America, the Lebanon and the Francophone African countries. The essential thesis of the Total Language movement is based on a reformulation of the required aims and objectives of teaching the mother language in any country. French language teaching then, is held to encompass the full range of the forms of expression and communication available and employed within the culture. Hence, the pedagogical methods are extended to include the wider context of communication through mass media such as television, film, radio and the press. Vallet summarises the basis of this approach stating,

> Nowadays in all countries the mother tongue is a composite language which comes into being through technologies, and in particular AV technologies. So fundamentally, the educator cannot teach the 'mother tongue, without meeting at the same time, AV and media
>
> (Vallet, 1989,:223)

This conception of language recognises the interrelated functions of words, images and sounds as the composite elements of contemporary communication. Over reliance on verbal language within schools is considered anachronistic and unreflective of the total means of expression utilised within the broader culture.

Vallet stresses the centrality of language in human experience not merely in its functional sense but perhaps more importantly as a socialising instrument, articulating the points of contact between the individual, and the outside

world of 'people, creatures, things and ideas'. The complexity of human experience, he argues, requires the wider concept of a 'Total Language '(a) because it encompasses the totality of the symbols and the means of expression and communication; and (b) because it brings into play the whole of one's being', (p 224).

Langage Totals' underlying thesis bears a marked resemblance to the work of Eisner (1981: as discussed in section 1.2) although the implicit definition of literacy which can be drawn from their generic conception of language is soundly based on a realistic understanding of the contemporary media ecology. Eisner, on the other hand, would appear to share the same basic premise but while looking to visual education in an 'artistic sense, paradoxically ascribes no operative role to the mass media as a widely accessible, influential and multifarious aspect of modern communicational systems. The new concept of communication as described by Langage Total and put into practice in numerous primary (and also secondary) schools represents a working example of how a broadened conception of literacy might function within the educational process.

Within the primary classroom, emphasis is placed on creativity and autonomous production. Students are given opportunities to devise, plan and produce documents using a range of AV equipment as well as newspapers, comic strips and magazines, promoting a 'practical and intuitive approach leading to structured and organised thinking' (p 224) Vallet

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maintains,

> If one gives a person the maximum means of expressing himself and communicating, it helps his personal expansion and helps him to find his place in society

(Vallet, 1989 : 224)

The following diagram, which was displayed at the Palais des Expositions in the town of St Etienne (1987, from Vallet (1989)) summarizes Langage Total's response to the changing socio-cultural context of education. This schematic illustrates a dual emphases on the abilities to both encode and decode messages in a variety of symbolic forms.

Le Langage Total

Media and their language, a language to master with instruments for studying and creating

Media				Instruments	
Books	Words		Receive the message	Pens	Various texts
The press				Brushes	Painting/engraving
Notices				Cameras	News photos
Records	Images	The Total Language		Projectors	Art photos
Radio				Instruments	Advertising
Cinema	Sounds			Tape Recorders	Review articles
Television			Express oneself/ create	Record players	Comic strips
				Cine cameras	Picture stories
				Cine projectors	Songs
				Television sets	Radio broadcasts
				Portable video	Documentary films
				TV studio	Fiction films
					TV broadcasts

(Table 1, from Vallet,1989:225)

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The Institut du Langage Total continues to expand its work in the South East and Western regions of France as well as abroad, providing counsellors, equipment, material and training for teachers of all levels from pre-school to higher education. Its members persevere in the fundamental belief that the entire educational system requires re-examination if the contributions made available through modern media and culture are to be fully availed of, rather than simply tacked on to the existing outmoded system. Their position, while perhaps radical to some, does not demand a complete restructuring of the system, rather a more equitable and dynamic synthesis of the old with the new.

2.3.2 Italy

Media education in Italy takes many forms depending on the particular university or school where it is taught and also on the political or religous affiliation of the many other organisations which are involved. At the university level, Bennett reports in 1979, a proliferation of courses in mass communication, developing out of huge student demands for such studies in the 1970's, and particularily after a statutory law permitted students from one faculty to follow courses in another. (Following this law, Professor Tarroni of Rome University found her class suddenly grew to 3,000 students!). This account however must be qualified by a more recent article by Mancum and Wolf (1990) who maintain that 'there is still insufficient academic institutionalisation of media studies in Italy'. They insist that mass communication

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studies have remained partially on the fringes of university development while at the same time enjoying a high profile in public debate.

The role of media studies in the schools became a topical issue around the mid 70's particularly following the Decreti Delegati or education laws of 1974. These laws essentially revitalised the system creating a climate conducive to the development of initiatives in this field. Bennett identifies three provisions in particular which were pivotal to this development: (a) that schooling should be adapted to the local environment; (b) that more experimental schools be established with adequate finances to offer new forms of curricula and teaching styles; and (c) that centres for educational research be set up on a regional basis under one national co-ordinating body.

At the time of Bennett's report, a primary school in Bologna, the Villa Torchi, was already successfully implementing a curriculum which took as its focal point the child's immediate environment, subsuming in this study the more traditional subject areas. The interdisciplinary approach adopted allowed media education to come into the school in an integrated way, with media projects being run concurrently with related studies of local issues. In the general Bologna region, media education also has a strong position in those elementary schools run by the municipality as again local or community issues play a large part on the curriculum. Part of the rationale behind this is that only through direct and

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active intercourse with real world issues will children develop an understanding of how society operates. Media studies then becomes a tool for social enquiry and participation.

As in the case of France, it has been the regional authorities rather than national who provide the impetus behind any media education initiatives which occur in the schools. Hence programmes have been dispersed and often discontinuous, frequently resulting from the enthusiasm of dedicated but isolated individuals or groups, (Combet, 1986). A recent article by Luciano Galliani (1991) from the Department of Educational Sciences at the University of Padua, would suggest that this 'ad hoc' approach may soon be substituted for a more formalised, system-wide strategy at the elementary level. Galliani reports,

> It is important that thinking so far, and experience in Italian schools, has finally placed the problem of image education on the agenda of those responsible for the system of formative education
>
> (Galliani, 1991 : 82)

Nevertheless, he goes on to say that the requisite practical knowledge of appropriate content structures and pedagogic methods is still lacking, implying that a coherent and well-defined curriculum is not yet possible. Galliani continues by providing a detailed and thorough proposal for such a curriculum, discussing its need, educational basis ('pedagogical fundamentals') and curricular aims. The position taken by Galliani in relation to a social

justification for 'image education', is broadly reminiscent of Langage Totals in recognising that the child's cultural communication environment has been profoundly changed by the preponderance of mass visual media in contemporary society. These media, he argues 'have taken their place in social communication, in our system of interpersonal communication .... changing fundamentally our systems of representation, codification, symbolism and expressions of reality', (p 82). Semiological, technological and aesthetic thought he maintains, have all reached a stage in acknowledging the existence and social consequences of an audio-visual language. Image education then must be understood within the broader context, of 'an education in strategies of communication,' encompassing the broader dimensions of communication today. Like Vallet (1989), Galliani stresses the role of human communication as 'an organiser of personal and social identity'. The function of education then is to guide the students through a more integrated understanding of the various 'languages' which are now involved in this process. This, he believes, must become the central aim of education, particularily at the elementary or formative levels of schooling.

Galliani bases his conception of the general and medium-term objectives for media curricula on a series of tables developed by the Lombardy Regional Research Institue (IRRSAE) which cover in a continuing cycle, early primary to secondary schooling. (See Table 2 for primary schools (8-11)).

General objectives	Medium-term objectives
Knowledge — To analyse visual and audiovisual codes and their relationships	1. To analyse and distinguish between the visual and cinematic codes (centring, composition, colour, movement etc) 2. To analyse the specific iconic codes (punctuation, montage) and to relate them to codes representing reality (gestures, verbal) 3. To grasp the temporal, spatial and causal relationships produced by logic (techno-linguistic) and by implication (continuity, opposition, asymmetry) 4. To analyse carefully all the sound codes (noise, speech, music) and the narrative codes (structures, characters, actions, position of the narrator) 5. To grasp the meanings arising from the relationship and integration between iconic, verbal and musical codes (second degree meanings)
Abilities — To develop creative self-expression by constructing visual and audiovisual messages using the maximum number of techniques	1. To use the various plastic, graphic, photographic, cinematographic and sound techniques, thus achieving manual/optical coordination 2. To follow, in an orderly way, the various production phases of visual and audiovisual messages (ideas, development of the drawings and/or photos of scenes, writing the texts, retakes, montage, sound) 3. To write visual and audiovisual texts which are descriptive (real drawing, documentation, photographs, videotaped information etc), narrative (animated drawings, tape/slides, films etc), argumentative publicity posters, photographic reporting, television spots etc
Attitudes — To recognise visual and audiovisual messages, and to react to them in a critical way	1. To understand the intentions of characters and authors of visual and audiovisual messages 2. To understand the symbolism of messages 3. To distinguish between various audiovisual types (information, performance, publicity, education) and their social functions 4. To rate the influences, preferences, and motivations of various messages and media 5. To form a personal opinion about various audiovisual programmes to enable a conscious choice

Research objectives for primary schools (8 to 11)

(Table 2 from Galliani 1991:88)

While these tables are quite general, they do provide guidelines for teachers and may stimulate them to develop further the themes suggested. An important characteristic of this work is the connection drawn between knowledge abilities and attitudes, three areas which have traditionally

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been treated as quite distinct categories in education. Through media education each of these educational goals become interrelated, making it difficult, for example, to speak of a students knowledge of a particular area without implicating accompanying practical skills or their capacity for autonomous critical response.

Galliani's work provides an insightful, if at times abstruse, discussion of how media education should be approached in the primary school and as he points out in his introductory remarks, such discussion is vital at this time in Italy, if appropriate legislation concerning systemwide measures is to be passed in the near future.

2.3.3 The Netherlands

As in the majority of cases, media education in Dutch schools originated in the desire to protect children from the negative influence of film and television. Most active in the sphere in the early years (mid 60's) were religous organisations who set up institutions to provide information and materials on film education as well as training for teachers and youth leaders. The Netherlands Film Institute became involved in education around the same period, publishing a series of booklets on film, organising seminars and distributing films for screen education. In 1958, a new syllabus for the secondary school which placed more emphasis on the 'all-round' development of the child, allowed screen education enter the curriculum as a non-compulsory subject,

dependant on the availability of interested teachers.

This development resulted in a number of measures designed to provide teachers with information, training and a forum for the exchange of ideas and experiences.(2)

The Ministries of Education and Cultural Affairs undertook various initiatives in training for the secondary level throughout the 70s and during the same period became interested in the possibilities for primary education. Various experimental projects were pursued gathering information which could inform the development of a coherent media syllabus for primary schooling. The Institute for Film and Youth initiated a number of projects both within schools themselves and in teacher training colleges, the latter examining how training in media education might best be organised. Ketzer (1988) cites the work of the National Insitute for Curriculum Development (SCO) and the National Insitute for Support of Arts Education (LOKV) in their efforts to 'work out the aims of audio-visual education (or 'media education') in the primary school (children aged 4-12 years) to explore the nature of audio-visual education and to establish a curriculum', (p27). These organisations have been involved in a project with two schools in Zaandam since 1978 culminating in a 'total curriculum' which will be described below.

Initiatives in Dutch primary schools then could be described as quite extensive and there is a growing body of information

available from the various projects which have been undertaken. Nevertheless Ketzer reports that again these activities are often discontinuous and overly dependant on individual enthusiasts. Few schools have been successful in introducing a permanent syllabus in media education and courses are interrupted if the relevant teacher leaves the school. In terms of the perspective taken, these are varied and subject to the educational outlook of the particular school. Broadly speaking there has been a movement from early moralistic approaches through analyses of film and television as 'works of art' to the current trend which understands audio-visual education as an education in communication. This latter approach is reflected in the work carried out by the SLO and LOKV in the Albert Schweitzer school and Hannie Schaft School on the Project for Audio-Visual Education in Primary Schools.

The concept of audio-visual education applied in this project distinguishes between the productive and reflective elements of the course with the further sub-divisions of design-interpretation, expression-impression and communication. (See Table 3). The design aspect of AV education is concerned with the cultivation of pupils creative skills, an active process enhancing sensori-motor development. These activities are centred on the production of expressive and communicative texts, employing a range of AV materials and appealing to children's abilities to recognise and express meanings and ideas in various symbolic forms. In relation to

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communication, Ketzer states,

> "This aspect is of an explicity social nature. It involves processes of establishing contact with others and learning to understand what other people express. This aspect calls for insight into communication processes, into standards and values, and into the field of tension between the individual and the community".

(Ketzer, 1988 : 32)

Audio-visual education

Reflective	Productive
Impression Audio-visual education aims at helping children develop an open attitude towards audio-visual impressions: 3. Children work in the look-and-listen corner.	*Expression* Audio-visual education aims at teaching children to use audio-visual media expressively. 1. Children make a photo collage. 2. Children draw slides.
Communication Audio-visual education aims at offering children knowledge of and insight into communication by means of images and sounds, and how this functions in the mass media. 4. Children discuss pictures.	*Communication* Audio-visual education aims at introducing children to the possibilities of portraying experiences and conveying messages with images and sounds. 5. Children make a radio play. 8. Children make an interview. 10. Children make a photo album.
Interpretation Audio-visual education aims at helping children to look at, discuss, understand and appreciate audio-visual designs so that they can form an opinion of their own. 6. Children discuss TV programmes. 9. Children compare newspapers.	*Design* Audio-visual education aims at teaching children to use audio-visual methods and operate simple equipment. 7 Children learn darkroom techniques.

(Table 3, from Ketzer, 1988:33)

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Intrinsic to this model of media education is the notion of 'composite language' made up of the images and sounds which characterise the total communication culture of today. Reflecting Vallets (1989) work earlier, Ketzer understands media education as 'the whole of educational activities aimed at granting insight into communication processes in society in which images, sound or both are used' (p 35). This process, Ketzer maintains, is an intellectual, creative and social one which has more to do with exploratory techniques in learning than a simple or mechanistic acquisition of knowledge. Again continuities can be found in the work of Galliani (1991) and the Lombardy Institute in Italy who highlight the inter-connectedness of knowledge, skills and attitudes as an influential attribute of media education.

Drawing on the work of the National Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO, 1984), Ketzer provides a brief survey of the contributions of this subject to the all-round development of the child, ranged beneath the conventional fields of;
  (a)   Social and emotional development
  (b)   Cognitive Development
  (c)   Sensory and Motor Development
  (d)   Creative Development

(Ketzer's summaries will be paraphrased here while the following chapter will provide a more detailed analysis of the relationship between media education and the integral objectives of primary schooling).

Media education offers children opportunities to articulate

in various forms their feelings, attitudes, experiences and observations. Through the emphasis which is placed on impression, expression and communication, they develop the confidence to express their own opinions while simultaneously practicing important interpersonal and group skills. In terms of their cognitive development the practice of media education poses some challenging exercises for which there are no standard solutions. These exercises are derived from the child's immediate experiences, hence providing frameworks for the interpretation of environmental influences. The open-ended nature of much of this work provides an exciting context for imaginative and creative problem-solving. Children are invited to locate general principles or patterns within media texts and then apply or break these rules in the production of their own documents. The practical and exploratory nature of much of the work has obvious implications for the motor system and senses. The materials used can be particularily stimulating for the aural and visual senses.

Throughout the 80's the Dutch Government have set up a number of committees to advise on innovations in education, (van Cuilenburg, 1987). These measures were a response to growing concern with the expanding information environment and rapid technological change. Hence, efforts are being made to contain the gap which frequently exists between educational practices and information technology. Although as Ketzer has pointed out, primary media education is not practiced as

consistently as it might be, there is every indication that this is a rapidly developing area in the Dutch educational system.

2.3.4 Austria

As early as 1973, media education became a didactic principle in Austrian education. A ministerial decree made it an obligatory concern for teachers of all levels and subject areas, stating,

> Media education, by developing the pupils' insight into communication phenomena should help the pupils towards the kind of consumer behavior which, for their particular circumstances, is at once possible, conscious and actively responsible. By means of media education the pupils should be able to find their way in a world about which they are largely informed via the mass media; they should recognise and understand the structure, design features and political effects of the communication media; they should be able to evaluate the mass media and their output independently and critically in order to make meaningful use of them and to integrate them responsibly in their lives.

> (Cited in Stotz, 1985 : 16)

This early formulation of the aims of media education is largely consistent with Masterman's principle of 'non-transparency' described previously, in that students are encouraged to examine and understand the range of structural processes which are the determinants of media texts. The added condition which recognises the need 'to make media education a pedagogic principle and to devote subject-specific attention to it in all disciplines', constituted a radical departure from most other European initiatives where educationalists are often still lobbying

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for such a provision.

Stotz reports, however, that following this decree, developments were slow to take place. Teacher training, which occurs on a regional basis in Austria, failed to provide sufficient support for the programme although the Ministerial decree did prescribe further training for all teachers new to the field. By 1985, this deficiency was still apparent although measures were now being taken to improve on the availability of training courses. Hipfl and Schludermann (1985) describe a series of seminars organised by the Institute for Educational Technology and Media Pegagogics, reporting that scepticism was prevalent among many of the participating teachers at the outset of this course. The organisational framework within which these seminars took place is referred to as a 'multiplier model' whereby the teachers themselves became lecturers and workshop leaders at subsequent courses thus multiplying the availability of training sites.

The conceptual model of media education which governs the guidelines given in this programme is derived from the general framework of communication studies. The two basic forms of communication, direct (personal) and indirect (media-tranmitted) are seen to be interlinked in that mass communication for example requires translation into personal meaning, or as Hipfl and Schludermann put it: 'direct communication forms the basis for a comprehension of the

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phenomena of mass communication, (p. 24). Hence it is considered 'undesirable' to engage in a media pedagogy which ignores the total communicational context in which the media are located. The aims of media education as defined by this approach are then,

- awareness of the various communications phenomena as well as the clarification of communication processes;

- the recognition of the link between mass communication and societal conditions;

- education towards independent and conscious use of the mass media;

- the acquisition of a critical attitude towards the mass media;

- the meaningful usage of the mass media for one's own needs;

- competence in using the media actively.

(Hipfl and Schludermann, 1985 : 25)

The seminars took place over a period of roughly a year, a one week intensive course during the spring term, four separate days during the summer and a three day seminar in the Autumn. Course content developed through examination of teachers own experiences with the media, teaching proposals in media education, practical organisation within schools and preparation of teachers for their future roles as multipliers. Overall, project leaders reported a marked change in the teachers' attitudes by the end of this training, noting in paricular an acceptance of the view that "media education does not have to be a burden, but can offer positive alternatives for the animation and updating of teaching" (p. 31).

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By the late 1980s, the Ministry for Education and Arts were once again actively involved in the field. A new decree on media education was issued in 1989, followed by a study examining the state of media education in primary schools, (Krucsay and Zuna-Kratky, 1991). This study took the form of a survey of relevant pedagogical activities as reported by teachers in response to a series of three questionnaires. The questionnaires dealt separately with three fields,

> (a) questioning media functions and media presentation, (eg. discussions about how different texts are produced and the varying presentation of events by different observers).

> (b) altering media products (eg. intervening in existing texts to produce new meaning).

> (c) creating media products (eg. production of posters, comics, newspapers, videos etc.).

In each case, the results obtained (from 2002 interpretable questionnaires) described a quite extensive penetration of media education into the curricula of primary schooling. In the case of questionnaire A, 66 per cent of teachers in the survey responded affirmatively that some activities in this area had been undertaken. The figures for questionnaires B and C were 83 percent and 71 per cent respectively. The percentages of specific media-related activities as calculated for all of Austria (Table 4) indicate that, perhaps predictably, the practice of poster production is high but comparatively speaking so also is the discussion of information transmission with particular reference to television, radio newspapers, and advertisements.

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Stimulated role playing 40
Fantasy Stories related to media 10
How a newspaper is made 44
How a TV or radio programme is made 44
What is a live programme 51
Supplied photos with text 23
Figures in self made plays 9
Means of presentation in ads 47
Varying presentations of one event 39
Skimmed and compared print media 29
Altered the sound of films 7
Discussed the transmission of infor 65
Poster 66
Comics 15
Students' paper 11
Theatre production 17
Tape production 17
Film (video) 3
Others 4
Used teaching material on media ed. 23

Percentages for all Austria

(Table 4, Krucsay and Zuna-Kratky, 1991:60)

While the comprehensive application of media education at this level has not yet been attained, the Ministry has been taking direct steps to improve this situtation by undertaking the production of teaching materials on a larger scale. In conjunction with teachers, advisors and university lecturers, a series of six modules have recently been published with an emphasis on practical, useful suggestions rather than theoretical discussion.

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These materials deal with a range of subjects, e.g. one entitled <u>Heroes, Heroes</u>? which invites children to explore the relationship which persists between themselves and their heroes or idols. Providing guidelines rather than axioms, the teaching materials aim to promote a discovery oriented climate where children can begin to discern the personal motives which underly this hero worship, be it peer pressure, wanting to be superior, or other social or emotional needs. While such discovery may not occur, and is in no way a requirement of this module, the children are involved in valuable discussion about the realities of the media as opposed to as well as in relation to, their own lives.

Each of these publications, the last of which appeared in the Summer of 1991, met with a positive response from the teaching community, indicating perhaps a more widespread shift in attitudes from that encountered by Hipfl and Schludermann in 1985. As can be seen, the Austrian Ministry for Education and Arts has adopted a positive and pragmatic approach to the task of improving the position of media education in primary schooling. Of particular significance for countries less advanced on this path is the positive correlation they have found between the widespread adoption of this subject and the availability of comprehensive teaching materials.

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2.3.5 The United Kingdom

The restructuring and gradual breaking down of the traditional school curriculum which occured in the United Kingdom during the 1960's (as elsewhere in Europe) paved the way for the development of media education at the secondary level. The 1963 Newsom Report, drawing directly on child-centered philosphies of education, made direct reference to the mass media, stating:

> The media help to define aspirations and they offer roles and models. They not only supply needs (and create them) but may influence attitudes and values. Little as yet has been effectively undertaken in schools in the way of offering some counterbalancing assistance. We need to train children to look critically and discriminate between what is good and bad in what they see.

(Cited in Alvarado, 1977 : 39)

While this report did provide teachers with an official sanction to pursue media studies and multi-media project work, the rationale recommended by this view was still largely within the framework of 'protectionist' or 'inoculatory' approaches. (In the U.K. this school of thought is generally associated with the work of literary critic and writer, F.R. Leavis). Around the same period, a counter-movement was developing in academic circles, which was providing a direct critique of this position, arguing that serious consideration be given to popular forms of media, (see for example, Hall and Whannel, 1964). At the same time, theoretical debates were beginning to incorporate some recent trends in film theory circulating within French journals (e.g. Cahiers du Cinema) concerned with notions of

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authorship, 'mise en scene' and genre. Concurrently, growing interest in the critical debates surrounding areas such as structural anthropology, linguistics and Marxist aesthetics encouraged some educationalists to rethink the theoretical frameworks underlying current practice.

By the mid to late 1970's media education began to appear on the curricula of some secondary schools, often with the added validation of 'O' Level or CSE examinations. Two of the major sources of support for these programmes were the Educational Advisory Service (EAS) of the British Film Institute and the Society for Education in Film and Television (SEFT).

In a recent publication, Lusted (1991) reviews the current state of media education in British schools. The situation, he reports, has altered significantly in the last five years prompting him to describe media studies as a 'growth industry' in contemporary British education.

In fact since then, British educational authorities have stated that aspects of media education must be included in the new National Curriculum as part of the Statutory Orders for English 5-16 (which also includes the teaching of Welsh). While the practical realisation of this principle will take some time to implement on a system-wide basis, the task is somewhat compounded at the primary level where any initiatives in the field have been comparatively recent.

The First National Conference for Media Studies in Primary Education was held at Leicester in May 1983 and organised by the SEFT, the BFI's Education Department, and Leicestershire Education Committee. This conference provided the first opportunity for those interested or already involved in media teaching to come together, exchange ideas and make plans for the development of primary media initiatives. Stemming from this and in response to the 1983 Department of Education and Science (DES) report Popular TV and Schoolchildren (reprinted and discussed in Lusted and Drummond, 1985) a number of regional working parties were set up comprising of parents, teachers and broadcasters. These groups have been working continuously through conferences, training courses and informal working papers to capture the attention and interest of other teachers and develop practical guidelines and suggestions for classroom practice. By November 1988, the DES document, English for ages 5 to 11, went some way in endorsing this work, stating that media education was 'central to the traditional aims and concerns of English teaching and should be undertaken in primary schools'.

Of particular significance in current developments is the BFI/DES National Working Party on Primary Media Education set up in early 1986. This group of teachers, advisers, teacher trainers and School Inspectors (HMI) have been involved in small scale informal research resulting in the publication of a curriculum statement in April 1991. This statement which was produced as a contribution to the National Curriculum

debate is now an important guide for teachers at the primary level, where resources of all kinds are relatively scarce. While providing important information on the role and potential of media education, it is the document's discussion of key areas of knowledge and understanding which is of particular use for practicing media teachers. Theoretical frameworks for understanding the media have been better expressed and refined since the early formulations of the 1970's, allowing, it is argued, key conceptual areas to emerge as the essential or core issues, (see Figure 5). Those are the areas understood to be basic to all media education, the initial constructs which children need to grasp and on which teachers can expand and develop in the classroom situtation (Bazalgette 1992).

The development of this conceptual approach has provided teachers with a much required framework for teaching practice which, as Lusted points out refuses a simple linear sequence in which one media is taught after another'. Each concept is a generalisation which means that both the specifics of a particular medium can be discussed as well as the similarities or differences between the full range of media. These concepts are also interdependent, which means they cannot be used simply and individually as the basis of a course of study. Rather they can help prioritize certain key issues and represent a useful way of organising our knowledge and thinking about the media.

WHO is communicating, and why?	**MEDIA AGENCIES**
WHAT TYPE of text is it?	**MEDIA CATEGORIES**
HOW is it produced?	**MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES**
HOW do we know what it means?	**MEDIA LANGUAGES**
WHO receives it, and what sense do they make of it?	**MEDIA AUDIENCES**
How does it PRESENT its subject?	**MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS**
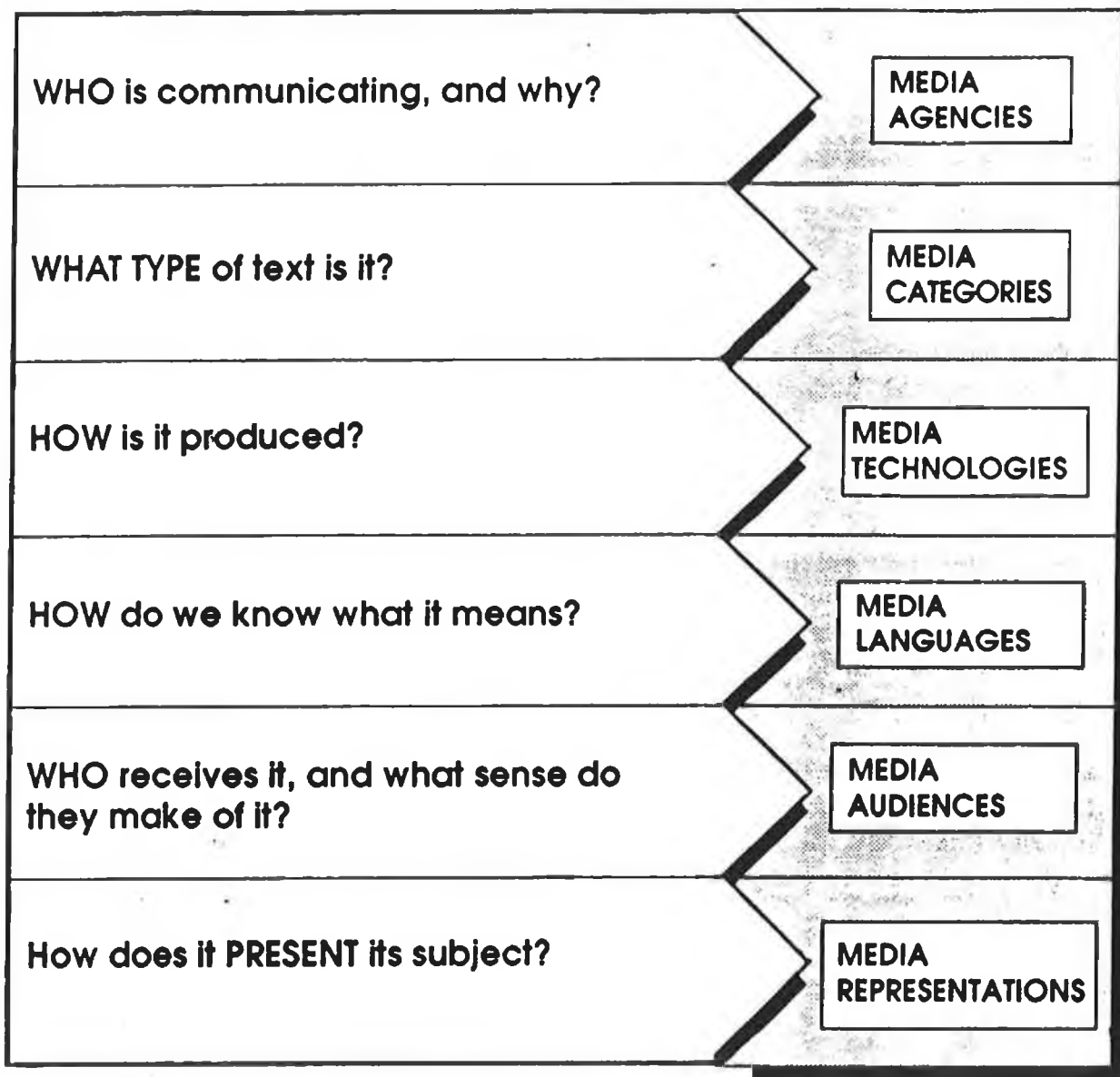
(Table 5, Primary Media Education:A Curriculum Statement, 1989:8)

Part of the Curriculum Statement provides a response to the Cox Committee's report on <u>English for ages 5 to 11</u> (DES, 1988) cited earlier. While recognizing the support given in

this report for the inclusion of media studies in English teaching, the authors express concern is that the components described make minimal reference to the media. In their alternative proposal they extend the areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing to take explicit account of the media as an object of study in English.

* Speaking, Listening and Watching.... Pupils should demonstrate their understanding of the spoken word and of the audio-visual media, and their capacity to express themselves effectively in a variety of speaking and listening activities, matching style and response to audience and purpose.

* Reading .... The development of the ability to read, understand and respond to all types of text (written, printed and audio-visual). The development of reading and information - retrieval strategies for a range of purposes using a variety of media.

* Writing .... A growing ability to construct and convey meaning in written and audio-visual languages.

(Primary Media Education : A Curriculum Statement, 1991 : 57)

Here, as in the earlier European cases, we can see traditional notions of literacy extended to include the fuller range of channels available for the expression and communication of meaning. The media environment of the young child is also acknowledged as an important resource in the development of awareness and understanding of literature and literary forms and conventions. Quoting from the Cox report, the Curriculum Statement (p. 59) points out,

...that little consideration is given ... to the fact that children's experience of narrative, 'of

> more lives than their own (6.2), of 'the ideas of
> feelings of people from cultures different from
> their own' (6.3), of 'new forms of expression and
> modes of discourse' (6.4) of 'rhythm, pattern and
> rhyme', (6.5) and 'of the presence of literary
> references' (6.6) does not come only from
> literature.

The media then in the form of television, cinema, radio and comics all contribute to the development of these kinds of knowledge from an early age.

The position of media education in Great Britain is now relatively healthy at least in terms of its official standing. Scotland, in particular, has a strong record where both AMES (Association for Media Education in Scotland) and the Scottish Film Council have been very active for some time. Figures for 1988 estimated that at least one third of Scottish secondary schools and a large proportion of upper primary levels were providing courses in media studies, (Butts, 1988). One can assume these figures are now somewhat higher in response to the marked increase of activity in more recent years. Naturally there is still much work to be done. The recent publication of a highly rigorous and comprehensive set of teacher training materials by the BFI in collaboration with the Open University, is, however, a positive and exciting move in the right direction. The pack, entitled Introduction to Media Education (April 1992) is designed for both primary and secondary teachers and aims to equip teachers with the full range of professional skills necessary in designing, teaching and evaluating initiatives in media education. While the reader contains a selection of

theoretical work, the course has a strong practical bias and relates directly to classroom work and teaching strategies. As yet, it is too early to assess the impact these materials will have in the uptake and development of media education in British primary schools, but if the Austrian experience is valid, it will undoubtedly remain a growth industry for some years to come.

2.3.6 Ireland

The background to media education in Ireland is similar to the experience of other European countries although any explicit policy for its establishment and development has been slower to occur. From the mid 1970's a number of individual schools and teachers were introducing media education into the classroom often as components of English, Civics or Art programmes. These initiatives were unsupported by any official guidelines or policy and, as McLoone (1984) points out, were dependant on the commitment and 'powers of improvisation' of the teachers themselves. As a result, media education developed on an 'ad hoc' basis and it was perhaps only the continuing support of the education initiatives of the Irish Film Institute from 1980, funded by the Arts Council, which encouraged isolated teachers to persevere in their efforts.

Throughout the 1980's (3) the IFI worked to encourage and promote the place of media education in Irish schools. Through a series of short courses and annual summer schools

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(run jointly with Radio Telefis Eireann) they maintained contact with practicing teachers, and with the establishment in 1985 of TAME (Teachers Association for Media Education) a regular newsletter was started to aid the exchange of information and ideas.

Any progress however was hampered by an out-moded educational system which finally came under review in 1984 by the newly convened Curriculum and Examinations Board. The Board was charged with the task of "reviewing curricula in both primary and post-primary education and of examining the need for reform in examinations and assessment procedures" (Programme for Action in Education, 1984). In its first publication, a consultative document entitled Issues and Structures in Education (Sept 1984), the Board outlined proposed new structures for the junior and senior cycles of the post-primary level. As part of the Junior Cycle Curricular Framework, media studies appeared as an optional element in a category entitled Communication, Language and Literature. Since this time, the proposal has been adopted and media studies has become an optional unit in the Junior Cycle English syllabus. The aims of this syllabus as outlined by the Department of Education involve the development of 'personal proficiency' in three interrelated areas: personal, social and cultural literacy. Stated as such, it is difficult to see how media studies could be regarded as merely an option, in view of our earlier discussions which have emphasised the media's centrality in relating literacy

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to social and cultural development. There is at present the added concern that in recent exam papers greater emphasis is placed on the printed message such as Newspapers and Advertisement text rather than the more popular media of television and film. This is perhaps hardly surprising as English teachers would tend to be more accustomed to dealing with textual information, than with the visual medium. As a result of this narrow focus, teachers are currently expressing puzzlement at how to deal with this new element of the Junior Cycle. Few teachers have had any exposure to media education either in their own schooling or at teacher training Colleges and opportunities for in-service courses in this area are limited. Efforts are being made to remedy this situation. Both TAME and the ATE (Association for Teachers of English) are involved in organising and running seminars at Teachers Centres throughout the country, devoted to various aspects of media pedagogy and practice. These, however, are irregular and attendance can pose difficulties, as the number of in-service days when teachers can avail of such training are limited.

There are also difficulties in terms of text books and supporting materials. John Nicholl in a recent TAME newsletter criticises the lack of a coherent approach to the topic in Junior Cert English books. Additional supplementary texts are scarce, although the IFI and the Curriculum Development Unit are currently planning to revise and update their 1985 publications, Every Picture Tells a Story and

Roll it There Colette. Other available texts are Owens and Hunts' 1985 publications Introduction to the Mass Media and Understanding the Media with related Teachers Manuals. (While useful texts in themselves, these books tend to adopt a rather didactic approach to the subject).

While the initial statutory introduction of media studies to the Irish educational system has hardly been auspicious, it does represent a beginning and signs are starting to emerge which may indicate a brighter future. The uptake of media related courses at third level has been extensive and is still expanding which in itself has strong implications for curricular design at earlier stages. At the Senior Cycle, mass media related image analysis has been integrated into many visual arts programmes and there is a growing lobby in support of the introduction of media studies as a free standing option at this level.

As in the cases discussed earlier, the primary sector is characteristically less advanced in terms of policy and practice. The efforts of interested bodies such as the IFI and TAME have been concentrated mainly on the post primary levels, resulting in a general lack of awareness among most primary teachers of the role and potential of media education at this level. The recent inclusion of media studies at the Junior cycle as well as the curriculum changes in English teaching in Great Britain will undoubtedly impact awareness and attitudes in the primary teaching community.

In their 1990 Report the Irish National Teachers Organization (INTO) directly addressed the question of the media's impact and influence on primary school pupils. This review was exploratory rather than definitive and sought to raise questions rather than provide any recommendations. However the concluding remarks do recognise and perhaps indirectly endorse the 'emerging' view that children should be taught "critical viewing and cultural reading skills". In addition, the IFI are currently formulating a proposal concerning media education at this level.

So while other European countries are moving rapidly toward system-wide measures there are some indications that Irish educational authorities may also be compelled to address this issue in the near future. In view of this, the context of primary education will be examined in more detail in the following chapter in order to ascertain and describe the precise nature of media education's contributions to the formative years of schooling in Ireland.

2.4 Conclusions

Conventional understandings of the aims of media education locate them within political, social and aesthetic analyses of popular culture. Hence Masterman's work, cited earlier, would generally be associated with a political and economic perspective which seeks to demystify and demythologise taken-for-granted assumptions about the naturalism of the media,

revealing the nature and sources of their implicit ideological content. The difficulty with much of Masterman's work is the sense in which such a perspective can still be interpreted as an inoculatory approach, however sophisticated. The suggestion is that there is a right-wing agenda running through media institutions and practices. However, this pedagogical response may run the risk of setting a far more rigid left-wing orthodoxy in its place.

Masterman's review of European trends suggests that this approach has been widely adopted and informs much of the practice of media education at primary and secondary levels. This chapter has looked specifically at a number of initiatives in the primary context which appear to indicate that emergant theoretical and pedagogical frameworks are much less overtly politicised in their orientation. They are more concerned with explicating the relationship which persists between the individual and their environment, or more particularily between the culture and the individuals capacity to 'read' and express themselves through the cultural forms available. This orientation undoubtedly stems in part from a recognition of the inappropriateness of introducing studies of power, control and ideology at this level of schooling (also noted by Masterman, 1980). The products and processes of the mass media then, are examined as elements within the sphere of cultural exchange rather than as abstracted commercial and ideological systems (a criticism often made of Masterman's approach). The

institutions of mass communication are examined as
intrinsic elements in societies structure with 'each
sustaining and reflecting the other though often in
distorted and reconstructed ways' (Kumar, 1985:8)

Central to media education at this level then is the
reciprocal relationship of exchange which exists between
individuals and their environment. The individuals active
participation in the construction of personal and social
meanings becomes a crucial part of the general framework
through which the media are examined. Equally important are
the opportunities provided for experimentation with
alternative forms of expression and modes of discourse.
Hence the general trend would appear to be consistent with
the broader notions of literacy and language which have
recently emerged in educational debates, (see p.7).
Recognising the changes which have occured in our systems of
social communication, these educational initiatives have been
designed to extend the range of literary and non-literary
experiences available to students. It is in this sense in
which media education becomes an integral part of a general
education in communication which is evident in many of the
discussions provided on European primary practice.

Nonetheless, as Kumar points out above, patterns of
communication in society are not necessarily dialogical or
non-authoritarian in character, so it is not possible
completely elude questions of power and control. What has
become evident in the review provided is a continuing concern

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to invite children to question, explore and speculate about the motivations and intentions underlying media texts and their authors. The approaches described each require a critical engagement with materials not only aesthetically but also in terms of their functional or influential role in defining societal norms and personal values. While the intricacies of ownership and control or complex theories of ideology are all but excluded, an initial foundation is given in explicating the relations which exist between the mass media and societal conditions using the child's own media experiences as a contextual framework. Further, more detailed and sophisticated understanding is then possible in later schooling building on the broader socio-cultural perspective adopted in the formative years of schooling.

So while media education at the primary level can continue to recognise and respond to the enormous social significance of the mass media, the discernible trend is to situate this critique within the broader context of an education in personal, social and cultural communication. By adopting this perspective the implications of media education at the primary level grow in significance and can no longer be solely defined as an educational response to the mass media. Wider issues of classroom practice, communication and personal, social and cognitive development come to the fore, propelling media education from the periphery to the centre of curricular concern.

Footnotes

(1) The reasons behind the absence of any Irish representation at this seminar are difficult to uncover at this point.   Ireland's participation has been extensive in other Council of Europe projects in the general area of primary education.   One can only surmise that an invitation was given but declined in the absence of any sound experience or policy in the specific field of primary media education.

(2) Kruger (1977) refers to the establishment of an organisation for teachers of film and television which publishes a regular journal entitled <u>Optiek</u>.   Also the first teacher taining courses in screen education were started offering introductory classes, workshops and an advanced course in film-making.

(3) Although IFI policy was unchanged, due to financial constraints they were unable to fund the position of Education Officer between the years 1986 and 1990. During this period TAME, whose secretariat was in the Institute, also became inactive but has since been revitalized by the current Education Officer.

EDUCATIONAL THEORY POLICY AND PRACTICE: SOME IMPLICATIONS
FOR MEDIA EDUCATION

3.1   Introduction

Up to this point little attention has been paid to perhaps
the most significant figures in the media education debate,
namely the children or learners who are being asked to
participate in these programmes. This however will be
redressed in the following chapter which provides an initial
discussion of the current state of our knowledge concerning
children's learning and thinking capabilities with
consideration also being given to contemporary theories of
instruction. By returning to the psychological fundamentals
of children as constitutive learners in a socially
constructed environment, it is possible to construct a more
adequate and sustained position from which to propose
innovations in their educational development. Our
understanding of cognitive development and performance is an
evolving process constantly refined and elaborated in the
light of new studies and fresh insights into existing theory.
It is to this work we will turn then in examining the
contribution of media studies to the educational experience
of the child.

There is little research available which clearly identifies
the links between media education and the broader cognitive

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competence of the learner, that is, a theoretical framework which consciously embraces the cognitive, creative and cultural implications of a media based learning programme. While some acknowledgements or passing references may be found, it is a theme which is sorely under theorised and at times disparaged as a secondary concern to media education programmes, the primary concern being, of course, to what extent children are learning about the media in particular. This is a valid though self evident question. What appears to be of equal if not greater educational significance is the potential offered for a radical redefinition of such central terms as teaching, learning and knowledge premised on contemporary notions of development and education. The aim here is not to formulate yet another justification for the 'Why study the media' series but rather to undercut the necessity for such rationale by highlighting the links which exist between media education practice and modern theories of learning and cognition. In Ireland where little progress has been made in establishing media education at the primary level, this approach should lend support to its small but growing number of advocates in the educational field.

While the aims and practices of media education may be consistent with contemporary educational theory, it is necessary to differentiate the latter from educational policy and practice. For this reason it is also useful to identify possible continuities with existing objectives in

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primary education as articulated in the Irish context. These objectives, first formulated in 1971, were part of a radical reassessment and restructuring of the primary curriculum and its underlying philosophy, echoing the more general worldwide trend toward child-centred education. It is these objectives which largely determine the content of primary education and as such are a key subject in the debate. In recognising the disparity which may occur between educational principles and actual classroom practice, recent research and commentary is reviewed to examine the extent to which informal teaching styles and progressive methodologies have been adopted in Irish classrooms.

In short, this chapter seeks to locate media education in terms of its content and pedagogical practices within our current conceptions of child development and education, both in terms of the underlying psychological theory and its practical manifestation in educational forms. In pursuing this objective, the significance of media education as a curricular concern is being examined for its broader implications as an approach to learning, and as such should provide some insights into its potential applications across the curriculum as opposed to a distinctive, 'free-standing' subject.

3.2 Perspectives on Child Development and Learning

Earlier the point was made that education takes place against

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a changing background of knowledge and understanding. The following section will discuss some of these changes in broad terms, sketching the development of our understanding of mental growth and indicating the constraints and opportunities these provide for the educational process.

3.2.1 Piaget and Education

In the decades prior to 1964 and the rise in interest in the work of Jean Piaget, theories of learning, particularly in the U.S., were largely informed by a stimulus-response model drawn from the work of behaviouristic psychologists such as BF Skinner and Ivan Pavlov. The practice of education then was generally based on patterns of reinforcement or reward with emphasis placed on the need for 'errorless learning' to obtain optimum results. A science of mental life was deemed impossible as such operations were not open to observation, so attention was directed to the observable responses and performances elicited throught tasks and instruction. The limitations of this approach in negating any important role for 'mental states' gradually became apparent as psychologists and educationalists, turned to the alternative account of intellectual development offered by Piaget.

Piaget's theory yields several principles providing a dynamic and respectful description of the child as 'active architect' of her own learning. According to Piaget, the source of

knowledge is action in that, "knowledge is not a thing which the organism takes in but a process by means of which it makes sense of its environment..." (J Turner, 1977:15)

Piaget then offered a healthy alternative to the positivistic theories of the Behaviourists proposing active systems of knowing whereby the child assimilates environmental forces into her own cognitive structures: hence "to understand is to invent".

Broadly speaking, Piaget's interactionist position specifies the adaptive transaction which occurs between biological endowment and environmental forces. This leads to development through a sequence of four stages of cognitive growth culminating at the formal operational stage which is characterized through the capacity for logical and abstract reasoning. The impetus determining this development is based on the child's need to maintain a state of equilibrium between their cognitive capabilities and environmental stimuli encountered. "Cognitive conflict" caused by a discrepancy between existing cognitive structures and some new event or experience in the child's environment promote the equilibration process which involves the complementary function of accomodation and assimilation. (Assimilation refers to the absorption or integration of new experiences by the child while accomodation is the subsequent modification of internal structures of thought). The child's development is conceived then as a self regulative and dynamic process whereby more powerful and complex schemas are

gradually built up in interpreting stimuli encountered in the environment.

While Piaget and his Genevan colleagues were by no means the first to emphasise the importance of the child as active agent of her own learning (1), his theories have had a profound influence in educational terms, perhaps due to their complexity and great inner consistency. Of particular significance is the empirical apparatus of stages of development, which of all his work has been most utilized in education, (Walkerdine, 1983). These have provided teachers with a formalized framework in understanding the intellectual capacity of children and the appropriateness of content for particular age groups. In some senses, this knowledge may be intuitively held by teachers but their elaboration in Piagetian stages has undoubtedly reinforced awareness of the need to prioritize the child and his/her developmental capacity, rather than treating curricular content as a corpus of knowledge to be transmitted, in a uniform, standardized manner (characteristic of earlier traditional approaches to education).

Paradoxically, it is these Piagetian structures which have attracted most criticism and debate in recent years. Studies have emerged which refute the experimental evidence he provided of the intellectual limitations of children at various stages of mental growth. (2) The adoption of these monitoring procedures may then be restricting the range of

educational experience available to the young child. Apart from a few misguided attempts to derive curricula directly from the Piagetian stages (3), much of Western primary level education is based in a very general way on these theories providing the foundations for taken-for-granted forms of pedagogy and practice.

At the concrete operational stage which ranges from approximately 7 to 11 years of age, Piaget maintains that the young child is limited in her capacity for abstract thought and hypothetical reasoning. He argues that these intellectual skills can only develop in later adolescence, that is if they are to emerge at all. While in principle, most students of child development would concur that younger children may be less adept than adolescents in logical modes of thinking, there have been questions raised concerning the extent of this disparity. Margaret Donaldson (1978, 1985) argues, for example, that children's abilities to reason deductively are never as limited as Piaget's theory would imply and a 'mismatch' has evolved between the school and children's minds. A further criticism has been made of Piaget's conception of mature adaptive thinking as best described through the capacity for logical and hypothetico-deductive forms of reasoning, (as used in scientific and mathematical problem-solving). Wood (1988:155) suggests:

> If we accept Piaget's theory of development one embraces not only his description of what children can and cannot do but also the very important argument that the course of intellectual development is constrained by the construction

and emergence of logical operations

Hence we are being asked to assume that logic provides a good theory of how people normally think and represents the summit of human intellectual growth. The implications of this proposition for educational practice are evident and might go some way in explaining the high value which is currently placed on disembedded, decontextualized forms of thinking and learning. Several theorists have recognized the limitations of Piaget's framework, Gardner (1982:14), for example, stating:

> ...adopting a certain conception of thought – that form of logical rationality valued by Descartes and glorified in recent centuries by Western science – Piaget may have neglicted central aspects of human cognition. To be sure science and mathematics involve sophisticated forms of thinking. But so do literature, art and music and Piaget had little to say about them

Similarily Bruner (1966, 1971) argues that logic is not the sole basis of mature thinking but rather one of several different ways or strategies for reasoning and as such must be ranged alongside creative, visual and intuitive modes of thinking for example.

In defence of Piaget it should be pointed out that he was not an educationalist and rather viewed himself as a 'genetic epistemologist'. His interest then lay in the identification and description of the origins and evolution of knowledge. Using a theoretical framework derived from logic and mathematics he sought to explain the nature and structure of scientific thought. His approach then led him to analyse

children's ways of thinking as logical operations and describe their interpretations of the physical world in terms of mathematical systems for representing reality. The explanatory power of Piaget's work with respect to academic knowledge and school learning is clearly insufficient. In concentrating on logic and hypothetico-deductive forms of reasoning, many other ways of thinking are ignored. And perhaps more significantly, the marginalization of all forms of codified, symbolized or cultural knowledge denies the central role that language plays in representing and codifying reality.

3.2.2 The Socio-Historical Perspective

An alternative account of child development which has only recently become influential in Europe and the United States takes as its starting point the social interactive nature of human learning. This work is based primarily on the work of Russian psychologist L.S.Vygotsky (d. 1934) and the American developmental psychologist Jerome Bruner who was one of the first to recognize the importance of Vygotsky's socio-cultural approach to learning.

Like Piaget, Bruner and Vygotsky stress the importance of activity in order for a child to develop an understanding of her environment. This emphasis on an active, constructive mode of learning does not necessarily mean physical manipulation of materials but implies active engagement with

and commitment to the learning context.   According to Piaget
(1970:68):

> ...it has finally been understood that an active
> school is not necessarily a school of manual
> labour...The most authentic research activity may
> take place in the spheres of reflection, of the
> most advanced abstraction, and of verbal
> manipulations (provided they are spontaneous and
> not imposed on the child...)

It is with Piaget's final parenthetical remark that Vygotsky
and Bruner would have most difficulty.   For Piaget's theory
proposes that children's learning must ultimately be self-
directed and spontaneous with the role of the teacher being
one who sets up the contexts and materials through which
this learning can take place.   The application of this
theory to education has been quite extensive generally and
has contributed in many ways to the rather tired debate
between progressive and traditional forms of pedagogy.   What
Vygotsky offers is a theory of learning and teaching which
includes the teacher as an active participant in the process
while remaining responsive to the needs and capabilities of
the learner.   For Vygotsky the capacity to learn through
instruction is itself a fundamental feature of human
intelligence.   He formulated a concept termed the 'zone of
proximal development' to describe "the distance between the
actual developmental level as determined by independent
problem-solving and the level of potential development as
determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in
collaboration with more able peers",   (Vygotsky, 1978:86).
Vygotsky's original concept has been elaborated on by Bruner

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and others (1976, cited in Mercer 1992) in developing an approach to teaching called 'scaffolding'. Using this instructional method, children are allowed considerable scope for initiative with intervention only occuring when needed. The role of the teacher or 'learned other' is to focus the child's attention on relevant aspects of the task or issue, highlighting areas they need to take account of. For Bruner and Vygotsky, then, instruction plays a crucial role in the child's intellectual development. Learning should be a co-operative activity where knowledge evolves as a product of the joint construction of understanding by the child and the teacher.

Here we are moving toward the essential difference which exists between the Vygotskian and Piagetian perspectives. For while Piaget focuses on biologically based forms of knowledge, Vygotsky conceives of knowledge as socially based and education as the sharing and imparting of cultural resources and wisdom. (4) As Mercer (1992:in press) put it,

> The neo-Vygotskian approach encourages us to treat knowledge as a cultural resource, rather than as individual attribute. It reminds us that the essence of, the unique quality of , human learning is that it is facilitated by social interaction and grounded in culture

Hence Bruner (1986:127) has refined Piaget's idea of the child 'learning by inventing' to take cognizance of the social, communal nature of education: "[It] is not just that the child must make his knowledge his own, but that he must make it his own in a community of those who share his sense

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of belonging to a culture"

Vygotsky and Bruner see knowledge as embodied in cultural forms such as language, literature, architecture, technology as well as action work and play, (Wood, 1986). It is through interaction with these forms in collaboration with 'more knowledgeable others' that the child develops understanding both of their own cultural experience and the extent to which they can participate in and shape their social worlds. For culture and communication are conceived as dynamic structuring systems through which the child and indeed the adult come to interpret, organize and understand experience.

Echoing the structuralist argument, culture is seen as a matrix of various symbol systems which do not merely function as the content of thinking but have a regulative effect on its very structure and activity. In relation to language for example, Vygotsky stresses the 'reversibility' of signs in that they feed back upon and influence the consciousness of the user. His emphasis on the semiotic dimension of language differentiates it from other mediating tools which are conceived as mere instruments in the hands of the user who controls them, (i.e. as used by infants or animals in goal-directed activities). This perspective has obvious implications for the current literacy debate discussed earlier, where language both spoken and written are often viewed as abstracted and neutral technical skills which are utilized by the individual controlling them.

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While much of the work focusses on language as our most powerful tool for organising experience, by 1986, Bruner was referencing Clifford Geertz and Roland Barthes in exploring the notion of Self as a text, constructed and shaped through cultural forms and processes. He uses Barthes's (1976) example of French toys to illustrate how cultural products inevitably signify and 'prefigure' for the child the social and ideological dimensions of adulthood.

This constructivist position is strongly supported by studies of cross-cultural differences in reasoning and perceptual skills. (5) These would suggest that our cultural inventions are not only the forms we produce or the 'ways of life' we engage in, but also the very modes of thinking we use in our daily interactions. The origins and nature of our mental processes are then essentially cultural and historical, generated in various social contexts through interaction and communication with others.

3.2.3 "The Language of Education"

This theory clearly has far-reaching implications for the role of teaching in our schools. The 'language of education' becomes a crucial concern when conceived not only as instrumental in engendering certain reasoning and thinking procedures but most significantly as a site where children's interpretations of experience and representations of reality are influenced and formed.

As indicated above, Vygotsky and Bruner emphasize 'talk' as the primary symbol system through which we constitute our sense of reality. Unlike Piaget who felt that language plays no part in the structure of thought, Vygotsky argues that 'talk' is internalized to become "inner speech" or thinking and so directs, modifies, regulates the processes of thinking and concept formation. This perspective on the interrelationship between language and thought focuses attention on pupil-teacher interactions and the forms that these take. For language is understood as perfoming a dual role in communicating information about a specific task or idea while at the same time providing a framework for mental processing which is gradually internalized by the child. Wood (1988:77) provides a useful description of this process,

> When we suggest, remind, prompt or whatever, we are providing insights into processes that usually take place 'in our head'. Vygotsky argues that such external and social activities are gradually internalized by the child as he comes to regulate his own intellectual activity. Such encounters are the source of experiences which eventually create the 'inner dialogues' that form the processes of mental self-regulation...the child is developing expertise and is inheriting culturally developed ways of thinking and learning

In support of this argument, Wood references a number of studies which suggest that qualitative differences in learning can occur in response to different teaching techniques.(6) Nuthall and Church (1973) for example, found that children who were taught through open-ended questions were encouraged to reflect, analyse and hypothesize more than those taught through specific questions, although they learnt less factual information per class period. More recently

Sigel (1989) has confirmed these findings, arguing that such an approach allows children space to reflect on and refine their own intellectual activity, developing an improved capacity for analytical and critical modes of thinking. Extrapolating from this, one might say that children are being given the time and the assistance necessary to make knowledge their own, while at the same time are encouraged to regulate and take more effective control of their own thinking and learning. This approach to thinking would appear to be consistent with earlier discussios of Bruner's notion of 'scaffolding' in that "it represents the kind and quality of cognitive support which an adult can provide for a child's learning - a form of 'vicarious consciousness' which anticipates the child's own internalization of mental function", (Mercer, 1991:64).

What is at issue here is of central concern to the educational enterprise, namely how do we impart knowledge and information to children while stimulating their capacities for self-regulated autonomous modes of thinking. This kind of intellectual development does not occur naturally. Even Piaget recognised the need for some form of instruction in order for reflective systems of thinking to emerge. Educational interventions to date however are widely criticized for the number of students who fail to take this step in their intellectual growth. Theorists such as Donaldson (1978, 1985), Barnes (1882), Young (1971) and others have identified the problem as located in the

disparity which exists between the learner's system of knowing and organizing experience and the altogether different framework imposed on them through schooling. Donaldson for example, argues that much of formal education is premised on the need for disembedded forms of thinking, i.e. thinking and problem-solving which is unsupported by human sense and context. In order to succeed in our systems a student must learn to think in highly abstract terms about tasks, problems and ideas that have little or no meaning in common reality. This emphasis increases as the child progresses through schooling. While recognizing that a specific system of values is operating here, Donaldson tends to favour remedial measures which might aid children in developing the kinds of skills we seem to privilege. Again language, thought and interaction are central to her thesis with the child's awareness of and control over their own conceptual system being a necessary step toward success. This she sees as an imperative of early schooling where reflection and self-awareness should be actively encouraged.

The difficulty with Donaldson's work is her acceptance (albeit grudging) of our current emphases on abstracted and formalized systems of knowing. She remarks for example,

> If the intellectual powers are to develop...it means learning to move beyond the bounds of human sense. It is on this movement that all the higher intellectual skills depend
>
> (Donaldson, 1978:123)

The assumption that such 'awareness' or control over thinking can only emerge from disembedded contexts is questionable.(7)

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As Bruner (1986:128) points out, understanding and appreciation of a literary text, such as Othello for example, cannot be based on the disembedded and abstract systems of thinking that Donaldson refers to:

> It's language and craft as a play, the stances in which the playwright casts his characters, its dramatic speech act...makes the drama reverberate in our reflection. It is an invitation to reflection about manners, morals and the human condition. This is not abstraction in the usual sense but rather a sense of the complexities that can occur in narratives of human action

Bruner continues by pointing out that even in the realms of mathematics and the science subjects which are based on more abstract symbolic systems, particular views of the world or 'stances' are unavoidably given. Elsewhere (Bruner 1971) argues that children must in a sense 'adopt the mantle' of those who practice a particular discipline, learn what excites or motivates them to pursue their enquiries and what tools or systems they use im making sense of the world.

So while Bruner agrees with Donaldson, Piaget and others that the development of knowledge can be conceived in terms of growing 'abstraction' and reflexivity, characterizing this solely in terms of competence in abstractly defined, decontextualized intellectual skills could be counterproductive for educational purposes. This is not to say that education is not in the business of presenting children with the disjunctions upon which reflexive thought is based, ('cognitive conflict' in Piagetian terms). Rather that encouraging such distancing or decentring is not

inevitably or perhaps even profitably accomplished by removing the supporting framework of human sense and context. In discussing this Barnes (1982:81) points out that,

> In so far as we use knowledge for our own purposes...we begin to incorporate it into our view of the world and to use parts of it to cope with the exigencies of living. Once the knowledge becomes incorporated into that view of the world on which our actions are based I would say that it has become 'action knowledge'.

The problem is that the links between 'action knowledge' and what Barnes calls 'school knowledge' are often difficult for students to make with the result that many students fail to see the relevance of what they are learning and 'opt out' of the system altogether.

This is not a new argument but its implications for education and schooling have yet to be fully elaborated. While work has been done to amend curricular design to take account of what the learner already knows, these interventions are predestined for only limited success if they are not part of a more radical, innovative change in the way we conceptualize the teaching and learning process itself. What the Vygotskian or socio-historical perspective appears to offer is way of thinking about education which focuses on children's thinking and learning as social and interactive activities. Intellectual development evolves through communication with teachers which is dependant on a shared or mutual fund of knowledge and practical activity. Development of the ability to think critically, systematically and independently emerges then from the context of jointly

constructed understanding and is a cultural rather than
'natural' product of the mind.

3.3 Some Implications for Media Education

The foregoing discussion has touched on a number of themes
relating to the relevance and practice of media education in
the formative years of schooling. Perhaps the simplest
question answered is that of its appropriateness for this
level of schooling. Concerns that subject matter and skills
required would be too difficult for primary aged students are
often implicitly based on the Piagetian stages of development
which, as research shows, imposes false limitations on their
capabilities. Equally significant is the move away from the
notion of logic as the only basis for mature adaptive
thinking, recognizing that for most of us formal logical
reasoning plays only a minor role in our daily interactions.
This shift in emphasis clearly holds implications for all
subjects on the curriculum. But for media education it means
that other modes of thinking such as intuitive, visual and
creative can be equally privileged in finding their way onto
the curriculum. This is not to say that logical reasoning is
not required of students but that it is only one of a number
of equally important skills which are called for in this
subject.

Perhaps of most significance to media education is
the constructivist or socio-historical perspective on the
role of culture as formative or instrumental in shaping the

ways in which we think about and perceive the world of experience. Language then becomes an important tool for making meaning as well as communicating existing meanings. Yet earlier discussion (see Section 1.4) has already indicated that the primacy of language is currently threatened or at least mitigated by a growing emphasis on visual forms of expression and communication. As Sontag (1977) and others have pointed out, our interpretations of reality are increasingly shaped through interactions with mass media forms with a predominantly visual bias. Public awareness of this is increasing as a recent press statement from the Pontifical Council for Social Communication shows:

> ...today much that men and women know and think
> about is conditioned by the media;to a considerable
> extent, human experience itself is an experience of
> media...todays revolution in social communication
> involves a fundamental reshaping of the elements by
> which people comprehend the world about them and
> verify and express what they comprehend
> (Aetatis Novae, <u>Irish Times</u>,
> March 26, 1992)

The important point to be made here is that if notions such as 'meaningful contexts' and 'relevant learning' are to have any significance in education they must inevitably recognise the full range of symbol systems and signifying practices through which the child interprets their social world. This means incorporating the media into a variety of disciplines, not as a motivator or novelty, nor indeed as an audio-visual aid or vehicle for transmitting information but as a means to engage in purposeful and directed learning which draws upon and acts upon childrens' existing knowledge and ways of

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thinking.

The BFI Curriculum Statement for Primary Media Education provides perhaps our most extensive account of how media education can be taken up in a variety of subject areas. Briefly these take the form of looking at relevant media texts and practical activities based on or derived from media materials. McMahon and Quin (1989) have disparaged some of the suggested exercises as seeming like 'busy work', a criticism which is easy to make and unfortunately one which some teachers might feel susceptible to. However, mere busy work can be difficult to achieve within good media education practice. Firstly what is happening when students engage with media texts and practices, is they are brought into the world of the practitioner. This might occur through an investigation of the types of science covered in Tomorrows World, or an examination of old photographs, (from a variety of sources) in a history class. The mass media in their 'democratizing' role have provided various forms of access to these domains of knowledge, allowing students some insight into the procedures, practices and applications which characterize the different disciplines. But this insight, through a media pedagogy, becomes more acute than otherwise allowed. For students are being invited to consider the hypothetical, uncertain nature of this knowledge and how it is constructed through various representational forms. Hence the whole idea of knowledge as a self-contained body of 'truths' comes into question, and Bruner's notion of "stance"

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is allowed into the curriculum.

> ...what is needed [in education] is a basis for
> discussing not simply the content of what is before
> one, but the possible stances one might take toward
> it.   (Bruner, 1986:129)

Later he adds, "reflection and 'distancing' are crucial
aspects of achieving a sense of the range of possible
stances," (p. 133). Such a principle could be seen as
central to the teachings of the media educaion curriculum.
As Buckingham (1987) suggests the contribution of media
education to other areas of the curriculum lies in the
opportunities it provides for questioning, analysis and
interrogation of both the texts themselves, and our responses
to them. Alvarado and Ferguson (1983) see this interrogative
aspect as an intrinsic feature of the subject which can
undermine and re-constitute the ways in which we teach.

> The school curriculum, they argue...   is realist
> in the sense that it is based on an empiricist
> definition of knowledge: it does not problematise
> the way in which the world is represented to
> students, but rather sees knowledge as a
> transparent reflection of reality. Media
> studies...challenges this dominant view by arguing
> that all knowledge is constituted through symbolic
> systems and discursive practices...
>   (Buckingham, 1987:37)

It is here we can begin to see the types of 'distancing' or
'decentring' which students are being asked to engage in.
Interaction with the environment, and relating education to
its everyday socio-cultural contexts, does not mean
uncritical acceptance of this 'external world', but an active
and critical negotiation of it. Lowenfeld earlier pointed out
it is through interaction with our symbolic environment that

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these 'abstract intellectual processes' are developed. The role of the teacher is to open up debate and 'scaffold' student learning, inviting them to question, explore and critique all manner of texts and cultural processes. Abstract, logical reasoning, achieved through detachment, is not the only way of 'reflecting' on one's environment.

Clearly the question of whether or not media studies has a cross curricular application does not arise when viewed in the light of current conceptions of knowledge, teaching and learning. This does not mean that media studies as a discrete discipline has no place on the curriculum. Rather, as Hartley et al (1985) have argued, it should be seen as a 'prerequisite' of the broader theme of media education. For while a media pedagogy should be central in all disciplines it is in the discrete area of media studies where more focussed attention can be directed at the specifically social and cultural aspects of the child's environment. The function of media studies is to stop the continuous flow of these cultural processes and begin developing in children a degree of awareness and control over the ideas, values and beliefs that are unconsciously taken from this wider social system.

It is through 'talk' and practice that students are lead to these forms of self-consciousness. Language remains an important means through which we actively organize and re-interpret the world of experience. Through 'talk' about the

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media, teachers create a climate where students can translate 'mediated meanings' into 'experienced meanings' and ultimately develop the intellectual skills to recognize the difference.

Practical activites draw on students implicit knowledge of the signifying codes of the various media. These have become intrinsic to the ways in which we think and learn. Drawing them into the curriculum then acknowledges the central role they now play in cognition and development. By working through the various techniques and constraints of production, students learn how meaning is a product of shared social negotiation and through experimentation may begin to recognize the significance of certain preferred conventions and meanings inscribed in professional texts. In other words, their implicit knowledge is made explicit and re-cast as students learn to 'write' as well as 'read' media texts.

This section has not yet broached the problem of exactly how one achieves good media practice and 'talk' in the classroom. These nevertheless are central concerns within the debate surrounding media education today. The experience of the last two decades has shown how easy it is to slip into what Masterman (1985) has called the 'technicist trap' (i.e. the tendency to concentrate on the technology involved at the expense of theory). The following chapter takes up this discussion in more detail examining some of the features of a short media studies course and critically evaluating the role of 'classroom talk' as a forum for debate and learning.

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What has been addressed here in a sense forms a response to Bruner's thought-provoking essay in the text Actual Minds, Possible Worlds (1986). The subject of media education never arises but the ideas he puts forward for a revised conception of education would appear to mirror the fundamental principles of this subject. Hence for Bruner the child does not merely consume or acquire the accumulated wisdom of the culture, but must be invited to participate within the processes at work in its production:

> ...the language of education, if it is to be an invitation to reflection and culture creating, cannot be the so-called uncontaminated language of fact and "objectivity". It must express stance and must invite counter-stance and in the process leave place for reflection, for metacognition. It is this that permits one to reach higher ground, this process of objectifying in language or image what one has thought and then turning around on it and reconsidering it

> (Bruner, 1986:129)

3.4 Media Education and the Primary Curriculum

In the final part of this chapter the context of primary education will be examined to assess the compatability of media education with the principles and objectives which underly the system. However, in recognizing the disparity which may occur between educational principles and actual classroom practice, recent research and commentary is reviewed to examine briefly what life may really be like in Irish Primary classrooms and what the implications are for

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the media education lobby.

A new curriculum for Primary Schools was introduced in Ireland in 1971 reflecting the worldwide trend toward child-centred education referred to earlier. Prior to this, early schooling was essentially subject-based with an emphasis on the areas of Mathematics, Irish and English. This new curriculum extended the range of obligatory subjects but perhaps more importantly called for a radical change in ideological and methodological approaches. Hence greater flexibility was allowed for in content and teaching styles and the interests and needs of the developing child became central factors in the educational process.

In the light of previous discussion it is interesting to see the extent to which the Piagetian structures became enshrined within this new pedagogy. In a section entitled "Psychological Research and the Teacher", the Curriculum Handbook (1971 : 18) states,

> Where psychology can help the teacher is in its discovery that in child development there are definite stages which follow in a sequence which may be advanced or delayed but not altered. Each person must experience each stage in order to be ready to advance to the next

Nevertheless the Curriculum does explicitly reference social and cultural factors and refers to language, mathematics and the arts as 'the means by which all knowledge and experiences are organised and made meaningful' (p 19). The subject of the

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media is addressed in the term 'parallel education' which is defined in a footnote to mean,

> The flood of information, stimuli and exhortations conveyed by sound and image by which the pupil is assailed outside the school, through posters, cinema, television, strip cartoons, radio and popular songs' (p 20).

As Fox (1986) points out, use of the term 'assailed' does imply an 'inoculation' approach, even if the Curriculum is making a welcome move in urging the need for some form of recognition of the child's media environment. Since this time, however, media education has remained firmly on the periphery of the primary system, despite the growing number of statements at home and abroad strongly recommending its adoption. (8)

Fox (1986) provides the following schematic in support of his argument that media education could be integrated quite successfully within the guiding framework provided by the 1971 Curriculum. This is derived from underlying principles identified by McLoone (1984) and the Curriculum and Examinations Board's summary in their discussion paper, Primary Education (1985).

Underlying Principles of Primary Education	General Characteristics of Primary Media Education
To be integrated	Cross disciplinary
To be activity based	Strong practical emphasis
To be child-centred	Teacher as a catalyst for student self-knowledge
To be based on the environment of the child	Local factors of primary importance

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To provide opportunities for exploration and discovery	Emphasis on the development of critical thinking skills
To recognise and cater for individual differences	Gives primacy to the child's individual experience
To cater for the full and harmonious development of the child	Highlights the importance of the child-media inter-relationship in the over-all development of the child

(Fox, 1986 : 161)

As mentioned earlier, the CEB were instrumental in securing a place for media studies on the Junior Cycle English Syllabus. At the primary level there was no comparable endorsement despite the fact that many of the stated aims in their discussion paper could clearly be fulfilled through media education. For example,

- be able to communicate clearly and confidently in speech and writing in ways appropriate for various occassions and purposes

- be able to acquire information from various sources, and to record information and findings in various ways

- be aware of the geographical, historical and social aspects of the local environment

(Primary Education, 1985 : 10)

Elsewhere it is stated that the 'functions of teachers will continue to change with increased emphasis being placed on teaching children how to learn rather than on what they learn' (p 11). The basis of the argument put forward earlier in this chapter is that such a change is directly facilitated through a media pedagogy.

It was suggested earlier that the question of including

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media education at the primary level will undoubtedly arise in the near future in view of curricular changes at the secondary level and the wider trends discernible throughout Europe. The INTO Report of 1990 has raised the issue and the IFI are currently formulating a response in the form of a proposal for media education at this level. The research and publications reviewed so far would appear to indicate that our current provisions for primary education could quite readily accomodate its adoption. Fox, in particular, has identified clear continuities between underlying principles providing a sound argument or justification at a theoretical level. Recent statements concerning current primary practice however (as opposed to didactic principles) indicate a major obstacle which may impede or adversely effect this innovation.

In the Spring issue of <u>Oideas</u> (1990), the Irish educational journal, Ciaran Sugrue provides an examination of the research evidence on the primary curriculum since 1971. These studies and surveys reveal the overwhelming endorsement teachers gave the progressive educational theory inscribed within the New Curriculum. However the translation of this acceptance into practice and methodology has not been as widespread as we tend to believe. Burke and Fontes (1990) for example report that "93 per cent of all class activity was teacher directed". Comparing their figures with those available from British studies, Sugrue concludes that Irish teachers are consistently more formal in their methodology.

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In his conclusion he remarks,

> The available evidence strongly supports the thesis
> that primary teachers believe the child is central
> to the educative process There is little available
> evidence to suggest, however, that this has
> resulted in widespread use of informal teaching
> methods. In so far as it has been possible to
> establish or make international comparisons,
> primary teaching in Ireland is characterised by a
> high degree of formal teaching.

> (Sugrue, 1990 : 19)

Later that year the Report of the Primary School Curriculum Review Body (1990) reiterated Sugrue's concerns and commented on the excessive emphasis placed on the traditional skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. Other areas of the curriculum such as the expressive arts, the Sciences and Irish suffered on account of this imbalance.

This debate has recently been carried over to the public domain in a newspaper article examining the problems of the primary school system (Doyle, Evening Press, Feb 20, 1992). Here it is argued by educational psychologist Mark Morgan that the pressures to achieve in the academic sense (a characteristic of Irish secondary schools), begins today at the primary level. He points out that the widespread use of entrance tests for secondary schools exerts an undue influence on the primary curriculum, where teachers feel 'obliged to concentrate on the subjects covered by these exams'.

An important point to keep in mind is that a supporting framework for planned change has been inadequately provided

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by the Department of Education. Teachers consistently report a lack of materials, resources and opportunities for further training while teacher:pupil ratios are regularly cited as one of the chief difficulties in teaching.

What has become apparent is that the primary curriculum is a great deal more narrow both practically and philosophically than previously believed. The principle of the 'all-round development of the child' is being sacrificed to accomodate a secondary system which is widely criticised as overly academic and exam-oriented. It is always useful to match principles when arguing for the integration of a new subject. However if these principles are not governing practice, what are the implications for the media education lobby? One scenario might be the relatively simple inclusion of media education (or more likely a syllabus in media studies) on to the curriculum at some point in the near future. The extraneous conditions would appear to indicate this as a possibility. The difficulty here is in the form such teaching could take. Signs are that media studies could readily become just another curricular area taught in the same didactic mode currently prevalent, with perhaps an eye on the Junior Certificate English syllabus (which is already text based, simulating the visual arts and English literature works).

The task of introducing good media education practice to such a system is fraught with difficulties and bound to fail

without extensive planning, training and resource materials. Yet if this degree of support could be provided and media education in a true sense became a reality at this level, the Irish primary system would be re-vitalised and brought closer to more recent perspectives on development, learning and teaching. For as Fox has shown media education coheres with the progressive methodologies articulated in 1971 but more significant are the direct links which can be found with current theories of education. These have moved away from notions of the child as individual learner to recognise the social and cultural dimensions of the learning process. The CDCC document Innovation in Primary Education (1988) refers to the alternative strategies for practice entailed in this approach, referring to the transformation in our perceptions of the child from "unskilled worker" into a "skilled professional worker". This group formulated a response to the question of how the primary school can contribute "to the development of individual automony with a sense of social responsibility". It is worth quoting at length:

> Primary education has to provide more than a narrow grounding in reading, writing and arithmetic, although these remain important. It has to widen children's perspectives of their immediate and wider physical and cultural environment. It has to help children to acquire and practice democratic values of tolerance, participation responsibility and respect for the rights of others. It has to stimulate the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes to learning which will shape their future responses to the demands made upon them by the secondary school, by the work place, and by the family and community. Primary education is thus a crucial foundation stage in what will be a process of life-long learning and in a multi-cultural setting.
> (Innovation in Primary Education, 1988 : 29)

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In their recommendations as mentioned earlier, media education is cited as one of the means through which these objectives can be achieved.

If Ireland is to keep abreast of changing patterns in primary educational provision, a more radical change in attitudes, methodologies and resourcing is required. As the system exists at present, the prospects for sound media education practice are less than favourable. The debate over the primary sector is however only beginning. Hopefully it will stimulate a careful re-examination of current priorities both educational and financial and result in a system which is "re-invented" to accomodate the critical, creative and investigative dimensions of media education.

FOOTNOTES

(1)   Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel and Dewey have all stressed the importance of self-activity in order for meaningful learning to occur.

(2)   See Donaldson (1978) for a comprehensive review of these studies.

(3)   See for example Kohlberg and Mayer (1972) and Schwebel and Raph (1974)

(4)   While Piaget did make reference to culture and communication in his work, he gave little consideration to these factors. Conversely, Vygotsky recognized the innate elements of cognitive growth but saw these as subject to the formative influence of social and cultural contexts.

(5)   See for example Serpell (1976) and Cole and Scribner (1974)

(6)   Wood also references the work of Brown and Ferrara (1985) who found that children drawn from 'low ability' groups were at times held back by teaching that placed 'low level' demands on them.

(7)   One might consider for example Levi-Strauss's concept of 'bricolage' which refers to the systems used by primitive peoples in responding to and thinking about the world around them. As Hawkes (1977) puts it: "The process involves a 'science of the concrete' (as opposed to our 'civilised' science of the 'abstract') which far from lacking logic in fact carefully and precisely orders, classifies and arranges into structures the minutiae of the physical world in all their profusion by means of a 'logic' which is not our own".

(8)   See Benson (1980), McLoone (1984) and White Paper on Educational Development (1980) for some earlier references to the need for media education in Irish schools.

CHAPTER FOUR

CASE STUDY : A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSING CLASSROOM PRACTICE

4.1 Introduction

Throughout previous chapters the argument which has been developed emphasizes the positive contribution that media education can bring to the primary school.   The 'language' of media education is critical, creative and negotiatory and links in directly with the children's own subcultural ways of interacting and learning outside the school.   The argument or working hypothesis has been   that this relationship with childrens   existing   knowledge,   its   'embeddedness'   in children's   ways of thinking about their   worlds,   can facilitate the emergence and development of critical and creative thinking skills and empower children in their unequal encounters with the mass media.

Undoubtedly other areas of the curriculum are instrumental in engendering certain ways of thinking and learning.   Through their   various   discourses   they   enable   the   development of relevant   cognitive and   creative strategies both on an individual basis and at times through group work.   What media education offers is a context where knowledge of necessity evolves from the child and the group through the intervention of the teacher and instructional method. This 'knowledge' is socially and culturally based and represents   a   large proportion of the framework or "window" through which the

child perceives and constructs their world views. Media education then is centrally concerned with examining this 'window', with highlighting and objectivating the processes through which the individual understands and relates to their social world. The impetus behind learning is the emphasis placed on the need for active, participation in their own learning and development both inside and outside the school.

It is the students' familiarity, expertise and "professional" status as skilled cultural actors which allows them to bypass stages of incomprehension where information must be absorbed and worked through. Instead they can move directly to synthesis and criticism, negotiation and inter-relation of alternative viewpoints and ideas. Obviously other areas of the curriculum are commited to the intellectual development of learners: the significance of media education is its characteristic and intrinsic concern with the critical and creative dimensions, these are the motivating force behind the discipline. Children already have vast areas of experience in these cultural forms and processes, and as Pompe (1992) points out, teachers can tap into these areas of fluency and confidence and adopt the role of a catalyst 'who wants to intervene to challenge their thinking and release their voices'.

In order to gain some insight into these processes, to explore the extent to which these claims can be justified in real terms, a series of workshops were carried out in two Dublin based primary schools. The objective however was not

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to measure success or failure against some arbitrary fixed standard but rather to expand our understanding of what kinds of educational activities are engaged in within a media education context. This is an area about which little is known. As a relatively new subject, systematic accounts of practice are only beginning to emerge. In England, the BFI through their Working Papers on Primary Media Education and recent Teaching Pack (1992) have accumulated several accounts ranging from the anecdotal to the more rigorous. However, in Ireland where primary media practice remains underdeveloped this type of resource is absent. The IFI Education Department have however recognised the importance of gathering such accounts both as resource material for teachers and as investigative studies in themselves. In view of the current stage of our knowledge then, it is arguably more productive to engage in open-ended forms of evaluation which may seek to consolidate current assumptions about learning but more importantly avoids the formulation of constraining hypotheses and research questions.

Of particular interest in the study carried out here was the nature of peer collaboration which occurs within independent working groups. Again little is understood about the intellectual value of such modes of learning even in the wider educational sense. Forman and Cazden (1985 : 329) have said,

> Collaboration requires a mutual task in which the partners work together to produce something that neither could have produced alone. Given the focus

on individual achievement in most Western industrial societies, curricula that promote collaboration are rarely found in schools or studied by educators or pschologists.

Mercer (1990) similiarly maintains that collaborative learning as a pedagogic technique has only recently begun to achieve legitimacy within the dominant educational ideology.

Hence it seems particularily important to examine what goes on as children work through and respond collaboratively to tasks as this represents a significant feature of media education practice. Most of the studies carried out to date focus attention on Teacher-Pupil interactions, examining how the teacher intervenes and 'scaffolds' student learning about the media. The behaviour of students working independently within groups has been addressed less often perhaps due to the methodological difficulties in gathering this information, (see section 4.2.2). However, it is within groups, through peer interaction, that children can more readily use their own 'voices', can reverse interactional roles without the inevitable inequities involved in the presence of a teacher or adult. It will be primarily through group work (at least in the initial introductory stages of media education) that children's subcultural knowledge will be able to access the school environment, where they can begin to value their existing knowledge and modes of interaction and learning. As Pompe (1992 : in press) put it:

> In my experience, a key to children extending their critical understanding of the media lies in finding contexts which legitimise their own private

and subversive voices, for they are the shoots from
which their critical faculties will grow. Where
children are too busy tryng to guess what the
teacher wants to hear and what rules will help them
survive in the classroom, media work will not reach
those areas of experience and opinion which
children defend from meddling adults.

The following sections provide a discussion of the
theoretical work and methodological techniques used in
gathering and evaluating classroom activities which occured
during a short media studies course. The use of a small
scale case study approach such as this is necessary where
classroom interaction and hence data recorded is intense and
loaded, requiring considerable attention and sensitivity to
detail in unpacking. The case study in a sense provides a
microcosm, through which useful insights and information can
be gathered to inform the more general practice of media
education at this level. It is through cumulative enquiries
of this nature that a broader factual base of practical
knowledge is constructed.

4.2 Methods of Analysis

While a general understanding of classroom activity can be
achieved through purely observational techniques, a more
reliable and productive method is possible using audio
recordings of classroom talk combined with a task and content
analysis of the material which generates this talk. Such a
qualitative and empirical approach falls broadly within the
research tradition of Reception Analysis which is concerned
with examining audience responses to media texts. Reception
analysis is chiefly characterised by its emphasis on the

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processes involved in 'reading' texts, the audience being understood as active consumers or decoders of media messages. The methodologies of such studies apply empirical methods in gathering data about audience responses but significantly incorporate a qualitative comparative analysis of media discourses with audience discourses; content structures, along with the structure of audience responses regarding content. Such studies seek to describe how particular themes or genres in media content are understood by specific audiences. Hence the configuration of audience background in terms of social context and interpretive community is also addressed.

In the context of this study, the children constitute a specific audience characterised chiefly through their developmental stage and the information processing capabilities available to them. The ethos of the classroom and their familiarity with the subject and its pedagogical forms are also significant factors which are addressed in a later section.

Similar to current reformulations in media research of the audience as active constructors of meaning, Chapter Three has shown how educational theory has begun to recognise the extent to which pupils negotiate and regulate their own intellectual activity, internalising not simply content but also the strategies of reasoning and thinking encouraged by this content. Since the pupils' learning strategies are

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profoundly shaped by the tasks required of them it is essential to have a clear and unambiguous understanding of the types of challenges or 'disjunctions' with which they are being asked to engage. Hence, a close examination of course content, its rationale and underlying objectives and task analysis of individual assignments is required. For the purposes of this study "the task" is defined as a combination of a) the subject matter and b) the demands laid upon the learner. By pursuing this strategy the structure of course content is clearly defined allowing for a qualitative comparative analysis with classroom discourse. Before describing and examining the course implemented some contextualising details are provided which deal with some of the theoretical and practical aspects of approaching work of this kind.

4.2.1 "Talk" as Evidence

The use of talk as a source of raw data is increasing as is evident in many recent educational studies. In the field of children and television, researchers such as Hodge and Tripp (1986), Durkin (1985) and Cullingford (1984) have all made extensive use of this form of data. The BFI Education Department freqently endorse this mode of enquiry. As Richard Eke of Bristol Polytechnic states,

> Classroom talk is ... reasonably easy to collect, it provides ample detailed material, which enables the development of a groups activities to be traced, and a recording provides a verifiable form of raw data
>
> (Eke, 1988:27)

All classroom interactions and discussions were recorded

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during the course of this study, providing as Eke indicates a rich resource from which to draw inferences and interpretations. Of particular value was the insight gained into the form and nature of the negotiative processes of children engaged in group activities. An understanding of the quality of learning occuring is not limited to impressions gained while circulating between groups or assessment of end products. Transcripts and recordings provide a permanent record of classrooom discourse enabling us to,

> compensate for our limited human information processing capabilites and to discover, after the fact, new aspects of meaning and organisation that we did not realise at first

> > (Erikson and Wilson, 1982:40
> > cited in Walker, 1985)

Nevertheless the value of this form of data is only fully realised when the exploratory and tentative nature of the conclusions drawn is recognised. Using language as linguistic evidence of specific learning or indeed thinking processes would be inaccurate. The subtle, complex and often allusive nature of talk is a constraining factor requiring research of this kind to be modest in its claims. The underlying structures of meaning cannot be simply and unproblematically 'read off' from the form that the language takes. Language is a mediating agency, and as such cannot be treated simply as a transparent medium through which the ideas, attitudes and values of pupils are easily discerned. Michael Stubbs (1981) argues that the inherent and complex organisation of

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language itself be examined before assertions are made concerning educational theory and practice. Linguistic data must be subject to description in its own terms recognising its structural and systemic complexity before relating it to a social context or social role.

Such a principled approach, while impressive in its analytical rigour becomes impracticable when applied in the research context. As Edwards and Westgate (1987:54) point out,

> It would be more persuasive if there were more general agreement among linguists that discourse is susceptible to a similarily coherent analysis into a system of elements and rules as can be demonstrated for example, at the level of syntax.

The questions raised in this study are educational rather than linguistic and consequently the lingusitic data gathered is described and analysed chiefly in these terms. Certain assumptions regarding childrens usage of language and its relation to cognitive and social strategies are unavoidable when using data of this nature. What is avoided is the creation and imposition of an inflexible category system in describing the learning behaviour observed.

There is an absence of any single conceptual framework or theoretical perspective in which to describe classroom talk and interaction. The variety of practical procedures available allow the use of a combination of methods, a 'tolerant eclecticism' which may be more realistic and rewarding when applied to highly complex data of this nature. Scrimshaw (1992) recommends that interpretations be validated

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by referencing other observations from the data which support or substantiate the explanations given. Additional resources in this study are the pupils' written work which can be cross-checked or "Triangulated" with observations from recorded discussions.

Barnes and Todd's 1977 study Communication and Learning in Small Groups has provided some useful guidelines on how to isolate and give meaning to exhanges which were recorded during this inquiry. Their own early work was one of the first studies to address and examine the nature of peer interaction within working groups in an attempt to identify and describe some of the cognitive and social skills utilised by students in the absence of the teacher. Their analysis is both modest and tentative in recognising the untidy and complex relationship which exists between linguistic forms and their illocutionary force, (i.e. the functional meaning of an utterance which may at times vary from its literal meaning). Nevertheless their study goes some way in uncovering the positive and productive intellectual activity which can occur within independent group activity. The framework shown in Appendix (I) summarises what the authors believed they had recorded. The functions outlined were used in this research as a loose frame of reference to guide some of the interpretations and inferences drawn from the data recorded.

4.2.2 Recording and Transcription of Tapes

In recording general class discussion one large recorder was used and left unattended at the top of the class. For group work smaller recorders were distributed with each group of three to four pupils taking responsiblity for its positioning and maintenance. The novelty of having group work recorded was apparent in both schools although in one, a recorder was occassionally used by the teacher in class discussions and debates. There were some incidences of students fooling with equipment however these decreased markedly after the inital lesson and generally pupils appeared eager to oblige and cooperate in the study. This was evident from the pains taken to ensure recorders were working and placed in optimum positions before work began.

Having their "talk" recorded undoubtedly had some effect on the nature of interaction within each group. Generally however students appeared to forget the recorders as they became engaged with and excited about the tasks assigned. In order to minimise their impact the importance of these recordings was never emphasised and, as mentioned above, students were given considerable control and freedom in operating equipment.

A decision was taken early in the research to record the entire class including group work, under as normal conditions as possible. The option to remove groups from the class and record them separately did exist but it was felt this would create an artificial and unique situation unrepresentative of

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normal practice in a media studies class. The quality of recordings suffered to an extent on account of this decision, the volume and variety of background noise resulted in some sections being untranscribable. However the loss of a small percent of exchanges was considered an adequate trade-off in ensuring a naturalistic context for the study.

Producing a faithful written record of recorded speech is a difficult and time-consuming task. Everyday conversation can be remarkably untidy with speakers talking simultaneously interrupting each other and changing constructions and apparent intentions mid-sentence. Other difficulties experienced while transcribing included the identification of speakers (the childrens voices often sounded alike on tape) and catching utterances made very softly or with the speaker's head turned from the recorder. The transcription took a great deal more time than anticipated and involved listening repeatedly to tapes and developing a more and more accurate record of the speech. The natural inclination to 'tidy up' utterances and exchanges was avoided or rectified by this process.

The style of presentation adopted conforms to the practice of most resarch using data of this nature. The level of detail offered in terms of paralinguistic features of language have been kept to the minimum degree necessary in reconstructing the realities of those being studied. Pauses, simultaneous speech, significant emphases are documented with the express

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aim of presenting a readable and recognisable account of specific exchanges. Nevertheless it must be recognised that these accounts are partial representations of classroom talk, hence further contextualising detail presented in this chapter is necessary to build as full a picture as possible of actual classroom and group practice.

4.2.3 Children and the Context

Over a period of four weeks, classes were held in two North Dublin Primary schools each with a predominantly middle-class intake. One a Catholic run, girls only public school (School A), the second, private, non-denominational and co-educational (School B). Altogether 12 hours of workshops were held in which a total of 52 pupils participated. These schools were selected primarily on account of the cooperation offered by teachers and school administrators in allowing this disruption to the normal class schedule.

In the case of School A, the teacher was already familiar with media education and expressed an interest in introducing the subject to the class. She had so far refrained from doing so because of the lack of resources and guidelines available for teaching. Her class consisted of 17, third class pupils aged 8 to 9 years and 20 second class pupils. Due to the nature of course materials, time constraints and the parameters of this study, it was decided that workshops would be carried out with the older pupils only. As the pupils from School B were from a fifth class, aged 10 to 11, it was felt that the inclusion of the younger, second class

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group would create too great a diversity of responses to materials and necessitate greater alterations in course design. The pupils from School B numbered 35, a larger group but reflective of most primary classrooms.

The differences between the two schools in terms of ethos, discipline and classroom practice were immediately apparent and to some extent evident in the talk recorded. The introduction of "unorthodox" material taught by a stranger was clearly something of a novelty in School A, perhaps the more traditional classroom. The students reacted with enthusiasm and energy, professing to enjoy and look forward to the workshops and being disappointed when they were over. The girls of this class, later described by their teacher as a 'lively and responsive group' appeared eager to do well, and tended to be concerned about assessment criteria. There were several occasions when students questioned the evaluative procedures underlying their work and appeared to have difficulty understanding the fact that there were no right or wrong answers. (An interesting response in view of earlier discussions concerning the tendency in many primary schools to 'internalize' secondary school norms). As the children became more familiar with the researcher and the nature of classes and materials, this confusion was resolved for the most part.

Students from School B, on the other hand, appeared to accept more readily the 'Non-Assess' nature of the media studies

program. They were evidently more accustomed to having strangers in the classroom and the more open ethos of the school meant they had been exposed to a diverse range of subjects and materials. Small group work seemed to be used as a matter of course, so students were familiar with working in this way. The students from School A, appeared less familiar with this context, the simple logistics of producing one piece of collaborative work rather than individual assignments had to be explained at length at the outset and reiterated at various times during the period. However after the first session children settled more readily into this type of work and groups were kept as small as possible, (ranging from 2 to 4 as opposed to 3 to 5 in School B).

Before the first workshop each class were given a preliminary presentation where the general aims of the study were explained. Students appeared to accept this rationale unquestioningly, although what impact their interpretation of the context may have had on their performance is difficult to determine.

4.3 Course Outline and Task Analysis

The programme of workshops implemented in these schools is broadly based on some commonly recognised principles of elementary media education. The course was desinged and presented to teachers as an "Introduction to Visual Literacy: to the students it was introduced under the more familiar title of "Looking and Seeing", while its general basis in media education was clearly understood. Within the time

constraints of the study it was possible only to provide a preliminary discussion and investigation of the concepts and ideas involved. Every effort was made therefore to ensure each component of the course was sequentially related and underlying concepts substantiated in supplementary assignments.

The BFI Working Papers on Primary Media Education provided a source of key concepts which informed the design and content of the course. The scope of the conceptual areas outlined in these various papers was considered too broad for the purposes of this study, hence minor amendments were made to narrow the range of content and approaches. These concepts were used as guidelines, and although the actual terms were never introduced into the classroom, they represented the areas of investigation pupils were being invited to address.

Construction: All media are 'constructs' through which meaning is produced via words, images and sounds.

Mediation: All media products are shaped by individuals, organisations and technological processes.

Representation: How people and events are portrayed, as stereotpes for example.

Convention: Commonly constructed and understood communication devices of media languages, including narrative, genre and presentation of information.

Reading: A process of decoding messages produced by any medium. The interpretation of a system of messages which can be both verbal and non-verbal.

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From the above key concepts can be read the primary focus of this course in encouraging students to draw distinctions between images and their referents, representations and reality and the techniques used in their construction. Students are being introducd to what Masterman earlier called 'the first principle, of media education', the principle of 'non-transparency'.

The extent to which children developed a comprehensive and critical understanding of these processes is perhaps limited given the constraints of time. Nevertheless, their reactions and responses did indicate these concepts are accessible to this age group and this introductory course was instrumental in heightening their awareness and understanding at a preliminary level. As Froggat (1992) points out, the first step is to raise children's awareness of the role of the media in society and in their own lives. One can then build on this, developing their independent critical awareness of how events, information, knowledge and attitudes are constructed through the range of media processes.

The specific design and content of this course is derived from a number of sources with original material included where necessary. The work of Masterman (1988), Clarke (1987) and the IFI/CDU publication Every Picture Tells a Story(1985) were particularily useful. Stephanie McBride of Dublin City University also contributed some sound advice and suggestions.

What follows is a day by day account of the programme of workshops implemented in these two schools describing, aims and objectives, constitutive components and an analysis of practical activities assigned in terms of the tasks and associated skills required of students.

4.3.1 Visual Games and Puzzels

Aims: The purpose of this class is to highlight for the students some of the problems and ambiguities inherent in visual perception. Through a series of slides and documentary material, the students become aware of how open to individual interpretation visual images can be; they also are made aware of the validity and significance of each of their own perceptions.

(a) Students are asked to consider the extent to which visual forms of communication surround them, firstly within the classroom itself, then extending this survey to the environment in general. The significance of this imagery merely in terms of its prevalence becomes clear to the students as they compile a more and more exhaustive list of examples from their daily experience. In order to reinforce this idea, comparisons are drawn between contemporary society and historical conditions with students being asked to provide examples of the kind and number of images one might have found in the 18th century and earlier.

(b) A series of perceptual exercises in the form of visual illusions are introduced to the class giving students an insight into the problematic nature of visual evidence. Through these ambiguous images, students begin to recognise that perception is not a simple sensory process but involves interpretation on the part of the 'reader'. Meaning is not immanent within the image, but dependant on individual, social and cultural mediations. The discussion which surrounds these exercises essentially underwrites much of the work to follow. Students recognise that diversity n response to images is possible and each of these responses while different may still be valid. In a sense one is permitting students to adopt a more flexible and creative stance toward images in general loosening up 'observational sets', as Masterman put it, by encouraging and permitting a variety of responses.

(c) This process is then extended through the introduction of more familiar images into the classroom. An example of a photograph (without the caption) taken from the daily newspaper is shown to the class. The object of this exercise at this stage is simply to encourage a closer examination of the photographic image. Prior to this it is assumed that photographic texts have been treated as simple, trasparent purveyors of meaning and little conscious effort has ever been invested in their perceptions of them.

Having established the polysemic nature of this news photograph, students are then asked what additional

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information is necessary to 'tie down' or specify its preferred meaning. The role of textual information in ascribing meaning to an image can then be illustrated as students offer suggestions of alternative captions.

(d) The practical assignment in this class essentially repeats and reinforces the classwork described in the section above with the distinction that work is now carried out in small unsupervised groups. The task sheet circulated contains one photograph, again taken from a daily newspaper and students are required to affix a caption (and headline if they wish). While this is a relatively easy and enjoyable exercise it has the added value of eliciting a number of important skills and faculties. Being an open-ended exercise it stimulates students to devise divergent responses and explore several possible authentic solutions. As a group, the students must discuss, negotiate and compromise their own and each others contributions in a context where each students participation, regardless of academic record, can be equally valued.

As the image is open to various readings, the students must again examine the photograph in far greater detail than most would have attempted previously. Attention is directed to deciphering internal visual clues such as expression, gesture, behaviour, clothing, age etc. Such an exercise draws on their own cultural knowledge and makes explicit their awareness of the photographic conventions being used.

Having completed this assignment, students must then report back to the class with their work and outline some of the reasons underlying their decisions. Here the students articulate and reiterate their impressions and understandings of the narrative content of the image and rationalise the choices made in determining an appropriate caption.

4.3.2 The Still Image

Aims: Students will be encouraged to look more closely at pictures and examine how images are constructed in certain was to produce meaning. This will involve an introduction to some basic codes of visual communication, giving students a more systematic tool for looking at images. Some of the ways in which images can embody 'points of view' through selection, editing, cropping angle etc., are also discussed. The practical activity is designed to enable students investigate how the sequencing of pictures influences the message we 'read'.

(a) A survey of class media interests is carried out in order to get some indication of the group's preferences. In this way the media teacher can ensure that discussions and materials are directly related and tailored to the classes experience of the mass media. This exercise also highlights for the students individually and as a group what these interests are and how they coincide or differ from those of their peers. Students also become aware of the many

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different forms of mass media they use daily and the amount of time that is spent attending to their messages. Opening up the class with this exercise establishes the participative context necessary for the discussions which follow.

(b) Students are invited to review some of the concepts and ideas introduced in the previous class and attention is directed to the captioning exercise carried out. Having ensured some familiarity with the general notion of 'codes', five basic codes of visual communication are introduced,

        (I)   Clothing
        (II)   Gesture
        (III) Expression
        (IV)   Objects and Background
        (V)   Technique

The application of each of these codes is illustrated through a range of examples given by students including aspects of the photographic image analysed in the previous class. Students recognise how interpretations of the image were guided by their tacit awareness and use of these codes hence illuminating some of the 'taken for granted' ways in which their perception processes operate. The value of objectifing or externalising these processes rests mainly in giving to students a systematic tool for looking at images. Their intuitive readings can now be directed in a more conscious fashion ensuring greater thoroughness and sharpness in their interpretations of all forms of visual imagery. Students can begin to understand that images too have a language and grammar of their own through which meaning is produced.

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(c) In continuing the above discussion, students are asked to re-examine the newspaper photograph with the original caption to discern which specific meanings are underscored. This leads to debate on how this preferred reading is created through angle, cropping, selection and textual anchorage. The sympathies of the photographer (as articulated in the image) are discussed and students are invited to hypothesize on possible alternative portrayals of this same event. The fact that images can contain a 'point of view' and are not simply 'windows on the world' is implied in this discussion as students become aware of the many influences impinging on the production process itself and the different responses possible depending on subjective and social context.

(d) The practical activity designed for this class is a combination of narrative sequencing and prediction. A two-page comic is distributed to each group with dialogue deleted and the final, concluding picture missing. Working as a team, each group must outline the principles by which the plot develops, provide dialogue and sound effects and draw in a conclusion for the narrative in the final frame.

This activity while moving on from analysis of the single image combines the skills and concepts introduced in earlier discussions. Students are required to pay close attention to the images and their sequencing in identifying visual clues to the organisation and development of the plot. The role of text in anchoring or specifying meaning is again made evident

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as students must create dialogue and sound effects for a series of quite ambiguous pictures.

The familiarity of the text plus the nature of the tasks required would allow students move directly to dealing with the areas of narrative structure, plot development and characterization. Although this may be an unorthodox way of approaching such learning it has the value of exciting childrens interest while also highlighting for them their current expertise in such areas.

4.3.3 Soaps and Serials I

Aims: When discussing course design with both class teachers interest was expressed in the possibility of including some work on television soaps and serials. The childrens overwhelming preoccupation with a current popular Australian serial Neighbours was the cause of some concern and teachers clearly felt this was an area which should be addressed. While the amount of time available was limited, it was felt that the children's enthusiasm for the topic alone could generate some productive and interesting work on certain key areas. In the first of two classes, the aim was to open up debate on the general character of soaps, their storytelling conventions, typical preoccupations and characterization.

(a) Before looking at soaps in particular a short exercise in categorising television forms was used to highlight for children the different ways in which texts can be grouped

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according to genre and producer's intentions. Children often have generalized and at times inconsistent ways of labelling television's output. Examining, extending and perhaps problematizing some of these labels can help organize this knowledge and contribute to the ways in which they respond to and understand different texts. The ways in which we categorize media forms can effect the ways in which we interpret and read them. Following class discussion students are asked to group programmes on a daily telvision schedule according to various categories such as, news, documentary, light entertainment, etc. Children are also being asked then to differentiate between series and serials and the discussion following can take up the specific paradigm of the soap.

(b) Through a series of questions it was hoped to elicit from children some of the principle characteristics of soap operas. Concentrating on their preferred text they would be encouraged to identify the prevalent patterns and relationships typical of the paradigm as a whole. The implicit aim of this discussion is to raise childrens awareness of what exactly it is that they get so much pleasure from. What accounts for the popularity of Neighbours, for example? The continuous nature of the soap, its concentration on the personal realm, the development of characters and interweaving storylines are all elements which should be identified by the students. By elaboration, a chart is used to identify principal plots and subplots and

the characters involved in each. Students are invited to hypothesize and predict how events might continue and what role the various characters might play in their development. Similar to their previous work on the comic strip, children are being asked to engage with notions of characterization and narrative development. They must draw on their implicit experience of particular characters and storytelling conventions.

(c)   The practical activity devised for this class builds on this already extensive 'archival' knowledge by asking children to intervene within the text and construct a biography for a potential new character. Working on a standard layout provided by the teacher, students provide background information, i.e. Name, Age, Work, Home, and Leisure Activities as well as a short personality profile. They are additionally asked to outline how their character comes to join the community, what their relationship is with existing residents and what role they play in existing or new plot developments. By working through this exercise, which essentially mirrors professional practice, students gain insight into the practical operations which underly a television narrative. They themselves become part of a creative process, constructing a personality, weaving them into a cohesive community through dramatic devices and techniques. Creativity is essential in order to create an original character who can contribute to and extend the range of events and tensions occuring within the community. The

constraints imposed by genre and existing relations between characters can be adopted as a framework or discarded in favour of more irreverent, energetic responses which challenge and experiment with the familiar conventions.

Unlike previous exercises here the idea of an imagined audience for their work is far greater. The decision-making process in each group should then be intensified as the various options and their implications are debated and negotiated.

4.3.4 Soaps and Serials II

Aims : In this final workshop the objective remains the same in that the work of the previous week is essentially extended and developed. Using an excerpt from television as the text, students are also reminded of earlier work on the still image and are encouraged to read more consciously the visual clues provided paying particular attention to the sequencing of images.

(a)   By returning to earlier discussion key areas concerning soap operas are reviewed and some additional elements identified such as the significance of public spaces in narrative development and the use of cliff hanger endings.

(b)   One scene from a current episode of Neighbours is shown, first in its entirety and a second time more slowly freezing after the first few camera movements or edits.   Students are

asked to think about the images they have just seen and identify the camera techniques used. This in some ways refers back to earlier work as they examine the sequencing of images and the edits, movements and camera positions which construct the visual narrative. Moving slowly through an excerpt like this also allows students to examine more closely the various elements of the image and consciously determine their significance both to the plot and the developing relationships between characters.

The aim of this discussion is to again highlight for students the highly constructed nature of media forms and introduce them to some of the specific codings of television narratives. In other words their attention is being directed to the 'seams' in what normally appears to be a 'seamless' unbroken narrative progression. The next step in such an analyses is to explore more closely the symbiotic relationship which exists between the camera and spectator, how the camera controls and constrains the perspectives and positions available to the viewer. To address this premise with any degree of coherence was considered beyond the scope of this study. The class focussed instead on the preliminary tasks of identifying and working with some aspects of the visual techniques themselves allowing awarenesss of this to grow in its initial stages from practical involvement with the codes.

(c) The final assignment set for students requires them to

storyboard a brief sequence derived from their own character biographies written the previous week. Having been introduced to the uses of storyboards and how they are produced, students work in groups to create their own. By working through this process at a practical level their understanding of previous discussion is intensified and consolidated.

This is a creative exercise which draws on students skills in narrative and pictorial sequencing. The codes of visual communication introduced earlier in the course are again instrumental in guiding decisions pertaining to mood, action etc. The significance of camera position, angle and framing as well as editing techniques are now additional factors which must be considered in constructing the relations within the narrative. Also possible at this stage is the development of an initial awareness of how the viewer is to interpret this text and how this interpretation is directly related to the coding techniques they decide on.

To complete this assignment will demand a large degree of co-operation between group members. The fact that they are working from their own biographical sketches should ensure a greater level of participation within the group. They have each already invested a great deal of energy creating a new character and an outline of their potential role within the community: now they are being invited to take the next step in production terms. The point that this is an integral part

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of professional practice has already been made ensuring that students see the relevance of the work they engage in.

Throughout the tasks set during this course the completion of good quality texts or products is a secondary concern. For media education in general, production is not an end in itself but a tool through which students can learn about the specific codings of images and sounds and how they are used in constructing meaning. Most practical work is also characterised by it's open-ended nature, allowing students to experience a collaborative process involving a mix of critical, creative and analytical approaches.

The following chapter examines the extent to which students were encouraged to adopt such strategies in response to the ideas and tasks embodied in the foregoing course. As mentioned earlier, the object is not to measure how much was learned about media forms and practices nor to what extent independent critical skills emerged. The questions underlying this investigation are rather more modest and exploratory, for example, in what way do students respond to materials? What are they doing in their talk? What indicators are there of educational activities occuring? And perhaps most significantly, what part is played by subject-matter in generating such behaviours?

CHAPTER FIVE

CASE STUDY: EVALUATION OF CLASSROOM PRACTICE

5.1 Introduction

The objectives of this chapter are to take a closer look at the type and quality of learning behaviours enabled through children's engagement with media-related tasks and materials. As Masterman (1988) has pointed out media education is primarily concerned with encouraging critical reflection and developing skills in investigative procedure of inquiry. Ultimately it is less concerned with specific learning outcomes than the critical strategies or skills with which children learn to handle their daily experience. What seems to be of crucial importance for all those involved or interested in media teaching then is an understanding of how these skills (cognitive, creative and social) are being developed and indeed to what extent such claims are even valid. This study has undertaken to examine these hypotheses exploring not what children have learnt about the media but rather the preceding phase of how they are learning with particular attention being paid to the context of group work.

Working within the culturalist approach discussed in Chapter Three, learning is conceived here as built on a social and interactive process, a sharing of resources between teacher and learner and between the learners themselves. The theoretical orientation underpinning this study sees

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communication as the key to learning as opposed to the Piagetian emphasis on individual cognitive development. Hence, classroom discourse is understood as the means for converting experience into knowledge, something shared and understood.

Some of the rationale underlying the use of small group activities in an educational setting have already been mentioned. The communicative space and collective responsibilites they allow learners differ markedly from the unequal rights and obligations which arise in the presence of an authoritative adult, (see for example Tizard and Hughes (1984), Edwards and Westgate (1987)). The assumption is that this potentially less threatening interaction may contribute to the generation of more varied roles for learners and greater latitude in exercising initiative and judgement. Bruner (1985) for example speaks of how young children can achieve new levels of understanding through collaboration and communication with friends. Barnes and Todd's (1977) work which provides some guiding constructs in this study, revealed that students can display a remarkable degree of collaboration as well as a range of social and cognitive strategies.

There have however, been some studies which tend to refute such optimistic claims. Philips's 1985 study found that the most common discourse strategies to emerge from "group talk" were "operational " and "argumentative" devices. The first

comprising of imperatives and forms of running commentary on what was taking place, the second being direct statements of disagreement. Less spontaneous, according to Philips, were hypothetical or exploratory uses of language. Within media education, Eke (1988) makes a similar observation reporting that in the "few brief episodes" of group interactions that he has located 'talk' is primarily used in achieving practical ends: "Lend us the red", "Where are we supposed to put these?". Following this he elaborates on the organisational role teachers often play within practical working groups suggesting that such interventions may in fact be appropriating some of the imaginative space intended for children. (Earlier discussions on the concept of 'scaffolding' student learning may be a useful way for teachers to consider the nature of these interventions).

The discussions recorded during this short, intensive course reveal rather more thought-provoking patterns of interaction and some indicators of more valued intellectual activity than those reported by Eke and Philips. Each group attempted the tasks which were set and produced talk of a sufficiently high calibre to warrant description and documentation. Variables such as the students themselves, the contexts, the tasks set and the way in which they are framed by the teacher all influence the types of learning responses one can expect from students. Eke's brief encounter with group processes should not be seen as representative then but an observation made on the basis of limited materials which cannot be easily

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generalised to other contexts.

The following pages provide an evaluation and interpretation of students responses to the media studies course using transcripts of their talk and to a lesser extent their written work as the bases of discussion. Moving sequentially through the classes a picture is built up of the kinds of educational activities students appear to be engaging in, paying particular attention to the part played by subject matter in generating these behaviours. In each case excerpts from the transcripts are used to illustrate what are considered to be interesting exchanges, the longer transcripts in which they are embedded are provided in appendix form. Examples of similar responses from other groups are also to be found in the appendices in the interest of validating and substantiating the inferences which are made. In each case, before examining the specific context of group work a brief account is provided of students general responses to class discussions and activities.

5.2 Session One : Visual Games and Puzzles

In this first introductory class aims and objectives were comparatively modest. For both schools, this was the students' first experience of media education and this class was mainly spent opening up the whole area of image analysis and perceptual processes as objects of study. It was expected that students would be led to a greater awareness

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of their visual environment and begin to recognise some of the factors which influence the ways in which we understand and perceive images. Having reviewed the data gathered, it was concluded that these expectations were largely fulfilled.

Participation levels were high in both schools during general class discussions. The first topic covered, the survey of images in their daily environment, elicited an ever increasing number of examples which resulted in quite an extensive list. These ranged from art work, posters and maps displayed in the classroom, to billboards, election posters, various advertisements, buses, bus shelters, road signs ("a black snake"), television, newspapers and photographs in general. In making a comparison between contemporary and early societies one student remarked,

P: Yeah, like we have loadsa pictures at home...(pause) they wouldn't have had any pictures of a christening or wedding or anything.

Here this student has not only offered a contribution to the survey but also implicitly recognises the important function of photographs today in marking and recording significant events in our lives. (As Sontag (1977) has said what is a wedding now without a photograph!)

Students enjoyed working with the visual illusions introduced next. These were of the standard variety, for example, the Muller-Lyer illusion, Neckar cube, duck-rabbit and mother-in-law/wife. In each case they struggled to find reasons for their ambiguity and concluded that ultimately "your eye is kinda tricking you". Working through a series of these

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illusions built up the kind of loose 'observational set' required to approach the next task of assigning meaning to a more familiar photographic image chosen randomly from that day's newspaper.This image (reproduced in Appendix II), while not perhaps 'loaded ' with alternatives, provided ample space for speculation. Students could identify the elements of the image but where and why they occured was less clear. The North or South Pole were offered as possible locations which elicited the following response from a fellow student,

P: I don't think it could be any Pole 'cos look in the
     background at all those trees and things, they don't
     really have mountains with trees there.

Close pictorial observation yielded a number of alternative readings which helped to illustrate the role of text and captions in restricting the range of interpretations possible. When asked what was needed in order to help us understand what was happening some student replies were:

P1: Emm...the name of the place?

P2: No, no, writing, writing under the picture, writing.
    (excited)

In both schools it was felt that class discussion and activities were largely successful in framing the subject-area for students. Their differing interpretations of both the visual illusions and photographic image had highlighted for them the varied yet authentic readings each of them brought to the texts. By the time group activities were started they were far more prepared to question visual

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evidence for possible meanings and had begun to recognise the significance of the image-text relationship.

5.2.1 Session One : Performance-Competence Analysis

It would be misleading to think of all subject areas, all knowledge if you like, as the same, as demanding the same kinds of mental activities, cognitive strategies, modes of enquiry. The captioning exercise set for students here is an interpretative task which requires an open approach to learning. Barnes (1982) has described this approach as 'characterized most clearly by the use of the hypothetical mode... (Students) ask ruminative questions of themselves and their statements are tentative, exploratory, inviting elaboration by others". (p.67)

The strategies which students appeared to adopt in engaging with this task are largely reflective of Barnes's formulation. Apparent within each group was a high usage of hypothetical constructions and tentativeness both in intonation and language. The readings they made tended to be quite irreverent at times, displaying a 'tabloid' sense of news but in most cases meanings which were fixed upon grew out of exploratory dialogue and collaboration between group members. The following extract is taken from a discussion which began with students using fairly definitive statements concerning the elements and narrative content of the image. These levels of certainty changed early in their work following one students diverging observation, which while

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rejected by other group members was recognised as a valid contribution. This exchange revolved around the identification of the people represented but made a significant impact on other group members' awareness of the ambiguity inherent in the action portrayed. It also served to encourage a closer examination of the image, initiated by a fellow group member which is where we join the discussion. The schematic used provides a useful way of looking at dialogue which helps to direct more critical attention at what the students are doing in their talk.

Utterance	Cognitive/Social function
11.A: Wait, now you'll have to take a closer look...(pause) it looks more like a lady	Adopts teacherly role Suggests alternative reading
12.C: Yeah, her hair and - (interrupted)	Offers supporting evidence
13.A: Yeah ye just have a feeling-	
14.D: That could be a police car back there look.	Raises new question but uses tentative, construction
15.A: Or it could be a place where emm...something maybe happened and they're just bringing her up to that.	Proposes alternative viewpoint moving beyond identifying elements to discuss narrative content
16.B: Maybe it's a swimming girl, you know she has a swimming hat.	Continues to question group concensus but is rejected
17.Ps: (Laughter)	
18.C: No, no something must have happened there and emm...and she must have got hurt and then they emm...bringed-	Collaborates with A Progress through task
19.D: Yeah something must have	Collaborates

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happened and they, and they rang emm...for the ambulance and she's being sent in the ambulance. (Excited)	Expands loosely on developing narrative
20.E: It might be a lady coming out of the grocer.	Attempt to undermine imaginative approach adopted by companions?
21.Ps: Hah, Hah, Hah (Sarcasm)	Evaluates contribution
(briefly untranscribable)	
22.E: Well it could be a robber who dressed up as a nun to get into the nun's place-	Encouraged to join in and offers alternative viewpoint. More irreverent than earlier ideas but plausible and popular with group members
23.Ps: Yeah (Excited)	
24.E: -or something like that	Leaves room for debate Recognises conditional status of own contribution.

From this short exchange it is possible to catch a glimpse of how children approached both the task itself and their interactions within the group.   At various points students are setting up hypotheses and voicing half-formed thoughts concerning the narrative content of the image. In lines 15, 18 and 19 for example, we can see how students paused, reflecting on their ideas which are offered as suggestions rather than definitive statements.   The language used in these utterances is less tentative than elsewhere but retains its negotiatory status by avoiding straightforward assertions of fact.   In their excitement at developing a plausible narrative line,   these students moved away from highly conditional language (such as 'could' and 'maybe') yet the use of the verb auxillary "must" weakens the certainty of the

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statement. Compare for example, 'Something happened there' with 'Something must have happened there'. In lines 22 and 24 again, we can see how the utterance is qualified to recognise and allow for the group nature of the assignment. This type of exploratory discussion is enabled both by the task itself and the context of group work. The presence of a teacher here would inevitably impact both what the children said and how they said it.

Close links between succeeding utterances might be seen as indicators of collaboration between the various group members. Again lines 15, 18 and 19 share similar content words and syntactic structures, which while not evidence of collaborative learning certainly lends itself to such an interpretation. The students interrelate each others ideas progressively building up a jointly constructed interpretation of what might be occuring. Elsewhere in this discussion (lines 35 to 37 for example; see Appendix II) we can see how students made use of one another's contributions finishing each others sentences, extending and modifying them. Ultimately the idea which shaped their final work was adapted and qualified before being accepted. Students continuously evaluated each others contributions making judgements concerning their relevance plausibility and accuracy.

One student in this group, Student B, consistently questioned any developing group concensus. At times, this forced his companions to reflect further on their ideas and in lines 40-

44, encouraged them to organise their thoughts beyond what the task explicitly required. However the contributions themselves were generally rejected although never unkindly. The group was never dismissive or disparaging and as can be seen this student continued in his participative role. Evaluation of non-participation or unsupportive behaviour was rather more energetic with students taking it upon themselves to manage and control any misconduct which occured, (see for example lines 21, 27 and 32; App.II p. 4). The social skills required in managing interactions in this context gave students the opportunity to explore the communicative space normally occupied by the teacher. The task itself was clearly successful in encouraging closer pictorial observation and their responses show a developing awareness of the multiple meanings possible within the image.

5.3 Session Two : The Still Image

The next class was designed to confirm and extend the work carried out above. Students were encouraged to reflect on the assignments they had completed, identifying some of the ways in which they had approached the task. In this way, confidence in their own expertise could be developed and their awareness of further possibilities extended before attempting the next practical activity.

Following the survey of class media interests, attention was redirected to the previous weeks work. Initially students

were asked how they went about identifying the people portrayed, which elicited the notion of clothing as an important feature of non-verbal communication. Moving beyond the image, class discussion centred on the general code of clothing and what kinds of messages are signalled by the different uniforms and styles people wear. Each of the other four codes, of expression, objects, background and technique were discussed using students previous work to illustrate their subconscious knowledge of them. In each case, discussion was broadened to take in aspects of the wider perceptual plane recognising that understanding any form of non-verbal communication is derived from and influenced by the childs own cultural and subcultural experience. Image analysis, in other words, is an inclusive activity which draws on social and cultural frames of reference which can remain implicit and non-negotiable for the most part. This exercise is essentially a first simple step in raising childrens awareness of part of this implicit knowledge in an attempt to begin encouraging greater perceptiveness of their environment in general.

It was felt that the 'code of technique' might pose most difficulties for this age group and much of this portion of the class was spent discussing the different ways that pictures might be taken and what impact these have on their meaning. The following exchange is included to illustrate how children responded when the subject was first introduced.

Ps: Technique? What's that?

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T: Technique is the way that you do something. OK? Say
      you're painting a picture, I might say to you, 'I like
      your technique' meaning "I like the way you're doing it"-

Ps: Oh yeah, right

P: Jean, does that mean you like the colours and things in
      the picture?

T: Yes, the colours you choose and where you use them and
      how you go about drawing your picture.

P1:   Jean, Jean, my sister drew a picture one day of a
      caravan and she drew all those flowers and things on it-

T: -Did you like it?

P1:   Yeah it was a good one

T: Well you liked the techniques she used, the way she
      coloured and decorated her caravan.

The confusion in the outset here has mainly to do with
vocabulary, the word but not concept of technique was
unfamiliar. In the latter part of this exchange one of the
students draws on anecdotal information to explore and
articulate her understanding of the term. This mode of
discourse is commonly used by students in what appears to be
an attempt to forge links between the familiar and
unfamiliar. As teachers we frequently interrupt this
process, compelling students to remain within set parameters,
ensuring the class continues to progress along the lines we
have arranged. Undoubtedly this is an essential part of the
educative process. As teachers know, one anecdote inevitably
leads to another. However, within media education the space
allowed for such musings becomes more of an issue. In the
above exchange, for example, one wonders what further
information this student might have offered in explaining

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both for herself and the class her interpretations of the term technique.

The discussion which followed focussed more particular on the area of camera angle, identifying where the photographer was positioned and what implications this held for the type of picture which emerged. Using the image from the previous captioning exercise, students could recognise the angle from which it was taken and when encouraged began to speculate about the significance of its framing.

T: Why do you think he took this picture from the front then?

P: So we can see the nun's sad face.

T: Mm... can we see anything else from here?

P: There's the policeman and this policewoman here and we can see her arm around her and she's leading her away.

T: Yes, we can see all their expressions and gestures.

When pressed further and the possibility of two photographers working the same event was introduced some student responses included.

P2:   You know, emm... when you say that two people might have gone to the same place but they emm... might have gone to the same place and the same people but taken different photographs.

P1:   Or taken different angles.

T: Right .. emm and what difference do you think this makes? Would the pictures be basically the same anyway?

Ps: Yes.... No (various)

P1:   No, no, Jean, with some angles only some things are shown like they'd be different pictures.

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At this point two images drawn from the IFI/CDU workbook Every Picture Tells a Story (1985) were shown which emphasise the significance of low and high angle camera shots. The time was not available to pursue discussions of these codes in any great depth, such an undertaking would require at the least a full class period. Nonetheless, it was felt that the discussions which did emerge were instrumental in encouraging more focussed and critical attention on some of the basic codings of visual language. Students were becoming more pictorially aware and were beginning to recognise the significance of framing, angle and selection in constructing interpretations of reality.

5.3.1 Session Two : Performance - Competence Analysis

The practical activity was met with a great deal of enthusiasm and energy. This task, involving narrative sequencing was rather more complicated than the previous weeks exercise, but the impression was given that students felt prepared and capable of producing some interesting work. The quality of group discussions together with their final written work tend to confirm their early optimism.

Independent of any instructions or guidelines, most groups began this exercise by constructing a loose outline of the general progression of the narrative. Paying close attention to the images and their sequencing, students worked through various interpretations and possibilities collaboratively

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developing a plausible yet exciting story. The following
extract illustrates this close attention to detail as the
group recalls some of the imperatives underlying this task.

P: They jump into some hot water

P1:   Oh no look come here, we have to figure out the clues of
      this type of place.

Ps: Yeah, yeah.

P2:   Yeah that shows they're kind of in a creepy place, so a
      kind of wood.

Later one student appears to recall earlier work on the code
of expression stating:

P: No, look at, look at the look of his face, it says 'yeah
      but I don't want to'. How's that maybe?

In each group, a great deal of effort was put into the
writing of dialogue. Students experimented with language
searching for what they considered to be the most apt and
colourful expressions. Rapid interactions produced a number
of alternatives until one was found on which all could agree.
This experimentation with language reflects back to earlier
discussions in Chapter One where it was argued that visual
imagery can provide a rich context for language development.
Using the visual stimulation provided by the comic, students
were encouraged to explore several alternative vivid
constructions in articulating their interpretations of the
text. For example, one group came up with the phrase "Run
Laddies Run" as opposed to the less descriptive, "Run
children" or "Run away". The character speaking these lines

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is an elderly fellow complete with flowing beard and hair and might be expected to speak in this more colourful way. The following, more lengthy extract illustrates some of the childrens' deliberations over dialogue while also providing some insight into their approach in developing the narrative content.

Utterance		Social/Cognitive Function
17. A:	Look at all these people here they look like traffic wardens or eh.. look teachers and traffic wardens.	Raises new question
18. B:	Oh yeah' what're they doing down there? Maybe they're slaves and they're being hypnotised 'cos their eyes are – oh but their eyes aren't black though.	Accepts A's frame Tentative response-expands loosely
19. A:	No I wouldn't say, I wouldn't say they're being hypnotised...Look he's whipping them that's why they're down there.	Agrees with B's assessment; refers to image for supporting evidence
20. C:	Yeah, they're slaves but ye see, and they're digging for emm... coal, no no, maybe it's gold or something, (excited)	Extends, elaborates continues narrative progression
21. A:	Yeah he thinks there's gold under there (excited)	Accepts C's contributions
22. B:	Yeah ok, so they say em... up there it says, 'Exploring the sewers, John and Jane come across a pool.'	Shifts topic in attempt to sequence narrative as roughly outlined.

23. A:	John and Jane fall down a drain.	Collaborates with B but qualifies, refines.
24. C:	Yeah, John and Jane fall down a drain, ... they're in the sewers and they find a pool.	Interrelates alternative viewpoints.
25. Ps:	Yeah, they find a little pool.	Refines, modifies
26. B:	Yeah and she says "Oh look there's a little pool here"-	Begins to construct dialogue.
27. C:	-And then she says, "Oh its got higher"	Extends preceding remark
28. B:	No, no she says, "Oh no it's suddenly got deeper". It's got deeper 'cos look...	

In this last utterance it is difficult to determine what visual evidence the student used in refining her companions preceding contribution. Nevertheless the group clearly works well together, constructing their narrative in an open and non-competitive atmosphere. Students are explicitly aware of the provisional nature of their own contributions and appear to almost welcome the co-operative aspect of the task.

In lines 22 and 24 students summarise their work up to this point, interrelating and sequencing the ideas they have developed. Again this function, where relevant, is normally carried out by a teacher. In this case students intuitively saw the need for this strategy in relating and interconnecting the developing narrative.

This type of reflexivity (as Barnes and Todd would categorise it) also appears to occur earlier in the transcript (lines 18,

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19 and 20). In these cases students seem to be monitoring and reflecting on their own contributions, deliberating over the plausibility of their ideas. The apparent tentativeness of their language and the changes of direction in their ideas would appear to indicate the exploratory nature of their thoughts at this time.

Transcripts of group discussions reveal the commitment and zeal with which students approached this task. The familiarity and indeed popularity of the text was a motivating factor which ensured a high level of participation and response. Building on their previous work, students again discovered that different meanings could be produced from the same materials. The absence of disputes concerning the correctness of differing interpretations would appear to indicate a growing acceptance of this.

5.4   Session Three : Soaps & Serials I

The following two workshops focussed most particularily on the Australian soap Neighbours. This, not unexpectedly, was popular with students from both schools who all appeared eager to voice opinions and generally participate in class discussions.

The initial exercise in categorising television forms proved useful as in some cases there appeared to be confusion surrounding certain familiar terms. This was most evident in School   A   when   addressing   the   differences   between

documentaries and news programmes and of course in differentiating between series and serials. In focussing attention on the latter, students were able to identify some of the characteristics of the soap opera, independently prioritising key conventions. For example, having pointed out the continuous, open nature of the serial form some students remarked,

P: Emm, I think they continue like that, I think why they continue in Neighbours and things is 'cos if you see a part of a film it's like you read a book, ye just can't kind of leave it, you have to see what's going to happen on the next page, sometimes it's too exciting to leave.

P1: I think they make them like that because emm, they get more money from when they're continued and they make them really exciting so em, they get more money from the TV.

Students were quick to 'make strange' their existing experience of and knowledge about soap operas. In the extract above (from School B) it was the students themselves who broached the topic of the economics of serial production. This provoked discussion on the relatively low cost of such programmes, their high popularity and the lucrative rates which can then be charged for advertising. Students had been aware of a profit motive, however their knowledge of how such revenue was collected was vague.

In planning this class, the principle features to be introduced were related to form, for example, storytelling conventions, typical preoccupations and characterisation. Already we have seen some evidence of the ease with which students can address these issues. When encouraged they

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began to examine the structure of the narrative considering
the significance of its continuous nature. The dependance on
a continuing range of unresolved questions in capturing and
maintaining audience interest was understood and students
went on to speculate on how these various plots and subplots
contribute to the overall attraction of the format. The
following brief extract gives an indication of how some
students began to articulate their awareness of this
convention.

P: Emm, I like Neighbours 'cos it's like real life even
      though it isn't. I think I like it 'cos there's all
      drama and everything in it and when there isn't there's
      always something else to make up for what isn't there.

P1:   Yeah, just say eh Lucy got a friend who, that was having
      problems like it would be based on that thing and then it
      would go on to Joe or something.

T: That's true, there's lots of different stories going on
      at the same time, isn't there?

P2:   Yeah and that's what I like about it, they make it more
      interesting.

The first students comment regarding Neighbours being 'like
real life' was taken up again later in this discussion.
Students recognised the centrality of 'family matters' within
the paradigm of the soap and began to examine this as a
representation of reality. Despite their unfamiliarity with
Australian lifestyles etc., they were adamant that this was a
purely fictional portrayal.   They were sceptical about the
number of tensions and conflicts which occured, concluding
that a great deal more goes on in "Ramsey Street" than in
ordinary life.   This of course is the attraction of the

programme which is seen by children as 'imaginative', 'exciting' and 'funny'. One student referred to the programme as 'gossipy' noticing that personal business and problems are discussed openly within the community. This was seen as another indicator of a fictitious world as 'in real life, nobody's <u>that</u> friendly with their neighbours'.

Having used the term "gossipy" the character of Mrs Mengel came up, previously the town's busybody and prude. As she had already been written out of the serial, students were asked if there were any new characters who might be seen as a replacement for her. They had little difficulty in identifying the new "fuss-budget" and could recognise the significant role played by this character in generating and relaying many of the developing stories. In general students displayed a sophisticated knowledge of the characters in this soap and in many cases, when pressed, could identify their functions within the community. As a chart showing the various ongoing plots and subplots was developed, they offered predictions about possible outcomes based on their experience of the personalities involved. This kind of competence was also required later in the class when constructing their own biographies of potential new characters for this soap.

Again the aims of this class were comparatively modest. Students were being asked to objectify their knowledge about a particular programme in order to highlight some of the

characteristics of the genre. In a sense this class was spent in valuing their existing expertise and exploring the question of why and how these programmes are so popular and entertaining.

5.4.1 Session Three : Performance - Competence Analysis

The practical activity designed for this session was essentially a creative process building on the groundwork already covered in class discussion. The task of developing a new character for an ongoing soap had been framed by earlier work ensuring students had some explicit guidelines to inform their decisions. Although given a choice, all groups based their character within the soap opera Neighbours on which most of the earlier discussion had focussed.

Different strategies were used by groups in approaching this task. Some, for example, decided on a particuar personality "type" before considering how they might be introduced to the community. Others decided on their character on the basis of some current plot development. Not surprisingly perhaps, the work of the latter groups proved more interesting primarily as time constraints prohibited the former from exploring fully the kinds of story their character might be involved in. Working from the standard layout distributed, students progressively build up a coherent personality profile paying close attention to the details of name, age etc. Each group were conscious of the need to ensure a certain consistency in the traits and characteristics they chose. Where they

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were already aware of the role their character was to play, they explored several options considering the implications of each before a decision was reached. They drew on their knowledge of existing characters, assessing their potential reactions and responses to different types of people and situations. The following extract shows how some students began to construct their biography, collaboratively weaving their character into existing patterns and relationships within the episode. This group began with a brief debate over which soap opera to work within, deciding that as Glenroe was off air for the Summer they should (perhaps in the interests of continuity) use Neighbours.

Utterance	Social/Cognitive Function
14. A: Now who's it got to do with?	Takes control; initiates discussion
15. B: Em, well maybe somebody new moves into the street, just pretend right –	Sets up hypothesis
16. C: – Yeah, and Joe, and Joe, and helps Joe get over his fear of flying –	Competes for floor; develops possible storyline
17. B: – Look right, and she falls in love with Harold	Competes for floor. Elaborates own idea
18. A: Yeah that's a good idea 'cos Madge is away	Accepts B's contribution, adds supporting detail
19. Ps: Yeah (excited)	
20. C: Yeah and and Carrie doesn't know, Carrie finds out	Extends, begins to develop relationships with other characters

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21. A:	OK well whats' the name, it's gonna be --	Ends discussion, progresses through task
22. C:	-- Anne - Marie?	Offers suggestion
23. B:	The name I think should be a pop-ish name	Proposes framework for discussion
24. C:	No not a pop name 'cos like it has to sort of fit in with Madge as well, so Harold, 'cos Harold doesn't like those sort of names does he?	Contradicts but uses knowledge of characters as supporting evidence

In this last utterance the student draws on her experience of characters, sharing her interpretations with the rest of the group. While her wording was perhaps vague, the rest of the group had little difficulty in understanding her point. If their character was to be romantically linked with Harold (a rather staid and pompous sort) her personal details and attributes would need to be carefully composed. Throughout their discussions they deliberated over the details of her employment, living arrangements and leisure pursuits ensuring some compatability with Harold's perceived preferences. When they came to consider her personality traits however, a new idea emerged to challenge this rather predictable formula and was met with approval and enthusiasm from the rest of the group.

A: OK, personality

C: Nice and gentle

A: No, no we have to have something else, flashy maybe.

C: Flashy? Harold? No Harold wouldn't like that

A: No, no, she falls for Harold but Harold doesn't fall for her.

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Ps: Yeah (excited)

B: Okay flashy and (untranscribable) .. sort of kind and loving.

A: Nooo, I know Harold would like that but we have to make it good, because they'd be bored because everybody in Neighbours is kind and gentle.

C: Yeah she's kinda flashy and outgoing and shocks people -

A: Yeah and maybe, and maybe Harold kinda likes it a little.

What is most apparent in this exchange is one students concern to add a little zest or excitement to the plot. Student A makes the point that the characters of this soap generally tend to be good, wholesome folk and saw a need for a rather more energetic and refreshing character. Her suggestion is based on an awareness of audience and the need to provide the type of character who can excite audience interest, extending the range of possible events and situations. In a sense her suggestion subtly but imaginatively alters the conventions of the programme, adding a new dimension of potentiality to the existing community. The character of Harold is similarily opened to mediation as the group considers the possibility of discovering a whole new side to his personality.

The evidence of transcripts and written work appear to indicate that groups continued to work in harmony, managing their own interventions into the world of "Ramsey Street". Again, the task was approached in a thoughtful manner by most groups refuting any claims that such media work would not be taken seriously by students. The task assigned appeared to

challenge each group while their existing expertise provided a strong support or framework for their ideas. Their ready competence allowed them to explore and experiment with characterisations and conventions participating in the non-judgemental atmosphere of the group.

5.5 Session Four : Soaps and Serials II

The objectives of this final class were to extend and consolidate some of the work carried out the previous week. In planning, efforts were also made to revisit many of the elements which made up earlier class discussions and activities. In this way a sense of resolution was sought as students would be required to return to and use much of the information and skills introduced earlier.

The class opened up with a brief discussion about soap operas in general, reviewing the principal ideas from the previous week. In terms of narrative structure, students had already identified some common features of this genre and had little difficulty understanding the notion of 'cliff-hanger' endings and their impact on viewers. The plan for this class also included some work on locations and the significance of public spaces, however as time was short it was decided that this could be omitted. For the tasks which lay ahead there were more important areas to be covered which related more directly to earlier themes.

Before screening a short extract from an episode of

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Neighbours, students were directed to pay close attention to the visual elements of the scene rather than its narrative content. As most of the class had seen this programme quite recently there was little resistance to the use of only a short segment. Following this viewing, students were asked some general questions regarding the kinds of shots and camera movements they had just seen. At this stage they were ill-equipped in terms of the language needed to identify the composition of shots, nevertheless their responses revealed the difficulties they experienced in breaking down the visual sequence in this way. The questions which were raised were used primarily to highlight for students this lapse in their perceptions and encourage closer attention to these details in their second viewing. The scene chosen depicted a confrontation between two people which began with an establishing long shot, zooming into a medium shot as the dialogue began. What followed was a series of quick edits and short pans, mainly close-ups revealing reaction and emotion. During the second viewing the pause button was used to freeze the frame after two or three shots.

Working gradually through the sequence in this way, students became more successful in identifying some of the ways in which the images were composed. Their work in Session One had already required them to start thinking about camera positions and angles and by slowing down the stream of images they began to recognise that similar principles were operating here. Basic terminology such as panning, zooming

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and close, medium and long shots was introduced to help them express their thoughts. This of course was quickly adopted by the students as they enjoyed the professional status it seemed to confer on their ideas. With little direction students began relating the visual techniques used to the narrative content of the sequence. For example, in the following extract, one student recognises the use of a reaction shot to increase the tension of the moment and reveal something of the character's mood and personality.

P: Jean, Jean (seeks attention over many voices) see the way the camera went back to Henry then when he (Harold) was speaking -

Ps: Yeah, yeah

P: - it showed his face like in a close up and, and he was kinda saying "Gawd" or something.

This observation prompted some discussion on the specific coding of close-up shots and where and why they might be used. The student may have intuitively recognised its significance in this case but making explicit their awareness of this convention enriches their roles as readers of visual narratives. The fact that we as viewers of this exchange were in some ways in a more privileged position than Harold may have escaped their understanding. Later during practical work however, one group made explicit use of this convention displaying a remarkable degree of sensitivity to plot development and audience response, (p 188).

This exercise provided a good introduction to the whole

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notion of storyboarding as in a sense students had been encouraged to 'mentally storyboard' this short sequence. Breaking down an existing narrative like this ensured an understanding which went beyond the simple mechanics of pictorial sequencing. They were able now to recognise more clearly some of the choices available in constructing meaning through a series of images.

The task set required students to create a brief storyboard working from their own biographies. An example was shown which displayed a very basic level of detail. All that was required of students was an indication of the type of shot (eg. CU, MS, or LS) and a simple sketch of how it would be composed.

5.5.1 Session Four : Performance-Competence Analysis

This assignment was a demanding task compounded by the limited time available for its completion. In most cases groups were unable to finish their storyboards but having worked through some of the sequences they had some active experience of many of the imperatives underlying this type of work. Drawing together strands from previous sessions students were now compelled to think about the composition of each image, their sequencing as part of a visual narrative and the meanings they might confer on their developing plot. Admittedly there did appear to be a certain randomness to some of their decisions. Yet even the exercise of having to make these decisions highlighted for students some of the

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constructive process involved in television production. Frequently in transcripts there also appeared indicators of more thoughtful and sophisticated approaches where attempts were made to marry visual meaning and story element. In the following extracts from one groups deliberations one can see how some students began to recognise the significance of image composition and the role they play in progressing the narrative line. Their story is a continuation of a developing subplot in which 'Henry' has recently destroyed the ceiling of a friends house. The group intervenes at this point with the idea that 'Henry' calls in the services of a reputedly inexpensive repairman only to be shocked at the quote he is given.

Utterance	Social/Cognitive Function
6. A: A close-up of him that's what we want	Initiates discussion Addresses visual coding
7. B: That's Shot 1	Accepts A's suggestion
8. C: Wait, maybe we should have the two of them, ye know the way they do it sometimes, like show Dermot as well on the phone	Proposes alternative approach
9. B: Like have the two of them in the same picture?	Asks for further elaboration
10. C: Yeah, draw a line down the middle, or across it or something, that way its not all on Henry	Expands draws on knowledge of existing convention
11. B: OK right, that's a medium shot then is it?	Addresses visual coding

12. C: Yeah

In the above exchange Student C's contribution is derived
from her existing knowledge of television's visual codings
and conventions. This however is not just a gratuitous
imitation of professional practice as the rationale she uses
has its basis in their own narrative needs. Some of the
limitations of language as indicators of cognitive processes
are evident here as undoubtedly this student was developing
an inner picture of how the visual sequence should be
composed. Nevertheless her utterance at Line 10 while
ambiguous, might be interpreted as a concern to ensure both
characters are introduced simultaneously and "Henry" does not
over-dominate in the opening shots.

In terms of their social interactions it is also interesting
to note how the student was given the space to elaborate on
her ideas and was questioned by a companion seeking further
expansion of her contribution. Barnes and Todd (1977) have
suggested that such interactions might be interpreted as
indicative of collaborative behaviour within the group. In
other words there is a low level of competition for the right
to speak and students are listening to the ideas proposed by
their companions.

The storyboard produced by this group (see App II) reveals
their awareness of the need to carefully sequence the
progression of images. They appear to have been relatively
successful in visualizing their series of still images in

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moving form. Shots 1 to 4, for example are a competent illustration of storyboarding technique providing a coherent prelude to later action. While the episode is perhaps foreshortened, this group was able to make good use of different visual codings to convey their meanings. In representing the central drama of their storyline (where 'Dermot', the repairman gives his estimate and 'Henry' reacts in shock) the group decides that close-ups depicting each character individually are most appropriate.

A: OK, shot 6

B: Right, we'll have ehh-

A: -a medium shot

C: No, no, no a long shot

A: No, wait a minute, no a close-up, just a face 'cos we want to see just a face when he tells him.

Ps: Yeah

(Brief discussion concerning how to draw a close-up)

A: Now we want just Henry when he says "Jeez" or something

The artist of this group is later remonstrated for the facial expressions of the two characters and changes are made to suit the emotional impact of the moment.

Some of the visual choices and decisions made by this group and others went beyond any of the ideas and codings discussed in class. Students were clearly making use of the rich repertoire of visual grammar and technique they possessed having gained greater access to this through the space and encouragement provided throughout the workshops. Despite

reservations concerning time constraints in tackling such a complex and multifaceted subject as the soap opera, the classes appeared successful in raising some important issues and objectifying student knowledge about the genre. As anticipated, their enthusiasm for the subject created a momentum which allowed rapid progress to be made in each class. Many of the transcripts of group discussions and their final written materials would indicate that students were in fact beginning to grapple with some relevant issues and ideas using frameworks provided through class to explore and create their own understandings.

5.6 Conclusions

The account provided in this chapter is clearly a partial and unavoidably selective representation of what occured during the workshops. The limitations imposed by space constrain the number of illustrations which can be given of how students responded to individual classes and materials. Collectively, however, the number of exchanges discussed are quite considerable and offer some valuable insights into the character of class response and group interactions.

The indications inferred from data recorded are that students succcessfully engaged with the ideas and tasks presented. Transcripts of discussions reveal that they frequently adopted analytical and critical approaches to their work, tending more often to problematise rather than simplify the process of production. In most cases choices were made and

decisions were reached on the basis of reasoning and deduction using the visual evidence available as well as their own experience and knowledge of the subject. In fact it was the familiarity of the subject matter which seemed to encourage confidence in their deliberations and give them the necessary support to explore the alternatives and possibilities present in each assignment. Groups collaborated well in what may have been an intiutive recognition of each members expertise and the desire to share interpretations and feelings about the different media forms which were used. Their language was negotiatory and exploratory as they collectively generated their understanding of materials, interrelating ideas and viewpoints to form a coherent and imaginative end-product.

Learning about our media environment is a demanding task at any age for it involves an ability to distance oneself from texts and formats which have become familiar and easy. It means, in many cases, defamiliarising the familiar by examining and experimenting with their codes, conventions and the various roles we can adopt as readers. The workshops held during this study reveal primary-aged students' ability and indeed eagerness to engage in these activities. Open ended class discussions and independent group work gave students the opportunity to discuss and examine their relationship with and knowledge of their environment in new ways. Additionally, by working through tasks and materials in this way a matrix of social, cognitive and creative skills

are required which are essentially subject specific as no other subject on the curriculum can make the same demands or envelops student experiences in the same way.

This study set out to examine certain assumptions made earlier regarding the educational impact of media education. Essentially, previous chapters have argued that this subject can provide a much needed site where students can develop the kinds of critical, creative and reflective skills which are fast becoming necessary attributes for all citizens. It is in the nature of the subject, its pedagogical method, and the strong links it holds with student knowledge and subcultural experience which allows such assertions to be made. The data recorded during this study would appear to confirm these beliefs indicating a rich resource for educational experience which remains largely untapped in this country.

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CONCLUSION

Learning about the media in any context means learning about communicative strategies, cultural interactions, the social construction of knowledge and meaning. Sophisticated areas granted, but areas not beyond the grasp of primary-aged students as previous chapters have shown. It is, moreover, this dimension of the subject which most clearly underlines the significance of media studies in the educational development of today's students.

The current literacy debate has prompted us to take a closer look at some of the pedagogical fundamentals which underly early education. This has led to some conceptual clarification of the issues involved in literacy development and how we choose to define this process. Many of the emergent perspectives recognise the existence of many literacies and broadly define literacy learning as 'learning particular roles, forms of interaction and ways of thinking', (Potter, 1990 : 2). It is through this process that the individual gains access to the cultural forms of the society in which they live. This concept invites speculation about a broader model of discourse, a multi-language model firmly grounded in the total experience of children. Such a model has recently informed many initiatives within Europe where the extended context of 'communication' has gained currency as a curricular concern at the primary level.

When one turns to recent trends in educational theories of development and learning, continuities can be found which tend to confirm this growing emphasis on communication and interaction. The sociocultural theory of psychological processes conceives of all cognitive development as a process of acquiring culture. The individual and the social are considered elements of a single interacting system through which cognitive processes appear and are formed. From this perspective, social and environmental factors increase in importance when considering the educational priorities of our schools. As the role and significance of the mass media in our lives increases and intensifies the need to take cognizance of its socializing force becomes more imperative. This is not meant in any reactive sense, rather in the sense that the media are now an important cultural force through which attitudes, values and beliefs are mediated and shared. Their signifying practices now play a substantive part in our interpretations of reality, our experience of the world around us.

The sociocultural approach provides both a framework for understanding this wider social process and a sound rationale for educational interventions which are derived from and based on such understanding. When one conceives of knowledge as embedded in cultural forms and processes and learning as facilitated through social interaction, educational practice must shift to accomodate a less prescriptive, more negotiatory approach. Intellectual skills in abstract or

logical thinking, for example, can no longer be viewed as solely 'dependant' on decontextualised learning for their emergance. In this regard Vygotsky (1978 : 57) argues that higher psychological functions appear "twice, or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an interpsychological category and then within the individual child as an intrapsychological category".

This emphasis on the communicative dimension in learning and the embeddedness of all forms of knowledge has resulted in a perspective on education which incorporates notions like uncertainty, flexibility and relativism. Students are encouraged to construct their own realities from the information and ideas which emerge from classroom work and debate. Education becomes more concerned with learning processes, procedures and skills rather than imparting prescribed bodies of 'knowledge'.

This perspective, which is more fully discussed in Chapter Three, provides a sound platform from which to argue the merits of primary media education. The principles on which it is based mirror those which underly good media education practice providing at the same time a broader conceptual model to inform and enhance this practice. Simply put, media education is centrally concerned with how meanings are communicated and recovered within society. Engaging in such inquiries involves an open approach to learning which takes as its 'texts' the full range of signifying systems used in

society to encode meaning in symbolic form. Hence the 'wholistic' sense of language learning is used which can embrace the more 'traditional' verbal literacies and the newer visual literacy activities. By examining, intervening and reflecting on the various ways in which we communicate with ourselves and the various readings which may be brought to these texts, students develop a sensitivity to language (in its composite sense) which can reveal its uses not simply as a tool but as a living experience.

The case study described in Chapters Four and Five revealed primary students' willingness, indeed eagerness to talk seriously about their experience of various media forms. Through discussions and practical work they engaged in a number of visual/verbal interpretive activities which required them to reflect on their shared experiences and subcultural knowledge. This provided a familiar context to work within encouraging students to explore and experiment with the codes and conventions of media languages. This study concentrated on evaluating group interactions building up a picture of how students collaborated in the joint construction of knowledge and understanding. The emergence of a communicative cognitive perspective means that this learning context can no longer be viewed solely as a site for the development of social or interpersonal skills. Equally significant now are the possibilities for the development of cognitive, creative and critical strategies which emerge as a result of task requirements, instructional method and the

interactive process. The inferences drawn from the data recorded during this study tend to confirm this belief in the educational value of independent group work as students exhibited a range of competences and skills in managing their interactions and coping with the tasks. The open-ended nature of media studies work intensified these processes as students discovered the negotiatory status of meaning as inscribed within the texts themselves and the groups responses to them. Hence their discussions involved analysis, criticism and reasoning as they investigated the many options available to them. They adopted exploratory approaches, developing hypotheses on the basis of their observations and experiences of the media forms used. Much of their work involved activities relating to narrative construction, characterization and genre recognition drawing on their largely tacit knowledge of how such meanings are conveyed through various symbolic forms.

This approach to classroom research which concentrates on students working independently in collaborative groups remains an area about which little is known. With the emerging legitimacy of communicative approaches to education however, more research is being undertaken in order to extend and refine our understanding of what kinds of learning are occuring, (see for example, Light and Perret-Clermont 1989: Rogoff 1989). In the context of media education, where group activities play a central role, there has been no sustained research into how students approach and mediate the

assignments they are given. The study carried out here is both tentative and exploratory in an attempt to begin bridging the gap between our theoretical assumptions and actual classroom practice. What is needed now are further investigations generating data in substantive situations in order to broaden and deepen our understanding of how students repond to the kinds of issues introduced and the related activities which are required of them.

Equally important at this time are further studies into the role of the teacher and instructional method in a media studies class. The achievement of a progressive pedagogy, which is an inherent attribute of this subject cannot be taken for granted. Classroom based research can draw attention to the types of activities and strategies teachers engage in allowing us to critique and improve our methodologies. Again, the sociocultural perspective on teaching and learning can provide some valuable guidelines. The conceptual metaphor of 'scaffolding', discussed in Chapter Three should prove useful in examining and evaluating the intervention and learning support teachers give to their pupils. In Ireland where questions have been raised concerning the widespread adoption of progressive teaching methods such research seems particularily imperative.

The thesis developed in this paper has to a large degree argued in favour of a broader conception of literacy which recognises both the print and audio-visual competences that

children bring to the school. At the same time Chapter One has shown that there are essential differences between these literacies which have to be acknowledged. Further research into the links between audio-visual and print media is required to clarify some of the implications of using the broader concept of 'media literacy' as an educational goal. Visual literacy activities for example cannot be viewed simply as a 'retreat from the word'. They are intertwined with the more traditional verbal language activities with each affecting the other in complex ways. As McLuhan said in 1964: "A new medium is never an addition to an old one, nor does it leave the old one in peace".

In Ireland there has been relatively little research undertaken which deals specifically with the potential for media education in the formative years of schooling. Ken Fox's, 1986 study might be considered the pioneering text, yet the level of research activity in the field since then has been scant. Unlike many of our European neighbours the Irish primary educational system and our Colleges of Eudcation continue to ignore the enormous social significance of the mass media today. They appear to be unaware of the growing movement in Europe which recognises the positive contribution media education can bring to the primary classroom. This study has covered much of this ground but further work is needed to clarify and solve some of the practical obstacles facing this curricular innovation.

Perhaps the most significant obstacle lies within the primary

classroom itself. From research and commentary reviewed in Chapter Three we have learned that our primary system is generally failing to provide the kinds of child-centred, open-learning environments that have become standard elsewhere. While teachers undoubtedly agree with such theories of learning, a lack of resources, in-service training and the pressures imposed by the secondary system all combine to produce a system most characterised by its formal, didactic emphasis. If media education is to have any impact on the Irish primary curriculum there will need to be a radical reassessment of current educational priorities. Should such a reassessment occur, one would hope that the Department of Education, having learned from past experience, would provide improved resources, training and investment to support this planned change. Within such a scenario media education might flourish as a revision of the current Curriculum Guidelines would inevitably take account of more recent cognitive-communicative theories of teaching and learning. The wider context of European trends would also influence the framework which emerged.

At the moment, the debate surrounding the introduction of media education at this level is only beginning. There are however some primary teachers who have independently started programmes within their own classrooms. With the reforming of TAME and their regular newsletter a forum has been created through which these teachers can communicate and exchange experiences while informing a wider audience. The

introduction of a media studies syllabus at the Junior Certificate level has in a sense broken the ice. What is needed now is sustained debate which can raise general awareness of the need and value of media education at this level and address the problems which arise when considering its introduction into our current system.

APPENDICES

Social and cognitive functions of conversation

LEVEL ONE
1.   Discourse Moves
     (a)   Initiating
     (b)   Extending - Qualifying, Contradicting
     (c)   Eliciting - Continue, Expand, Bring in, Support
     (d)   Responding - Accepting

2.   Logical Processes
     (a)   Proposes a cause   (b)   Proposes a result
     (c)   Expands loosely (for example gives descriptive details)
     (d)   Applies a principle to a case   (e)   Categorizes
     (f)   States conditions under which a statement is valid or
           invalid
     (g)   Advances evidence   (h)   Negates   (i)   Evaluates
     (j)   Puts alternative view
     (k)   Suggests a method   (l)   Restates in different terms

LEVEL TWO
3.   Social Skills
     (a)   Progress through task   Given questions, shifting
                                          ending a discussion,
                                          managing manipulator
                                          tasks
     (b)   Competition and conflict   Competition for floor,
                                          contradiction, joking,
                                          compelling participation
     (c)   Supportive behaviour   Explicit agreement,
                                          naming, reference back,
                                          explicit approval of
                                          others, expression of
                                          shared feeling

4.   Cognitive Strategies
     (a)   Constructing the question   closed tasks, open tasks
     (b)   Raising new questions
     (c)   Setting up hypotheses   beyond the given, explicit
                                          hypotheses
     (d)   Using evidence   (anecdote, hypothetical
                                          cases, using everyday
                                          knowledge, challenging
                                          generalities)
     (e)   Expressing feelings and   (expressed ethical
           recreating experience   judgments, shared
                                          recreation of literary
                                          experience)

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5. Reflexivity
    (a) Monitoring own speech   (own contributions
        and thought   provisional)
    (b) Interrelating alternative   (validity to others, more
        viewpoints   than one possiblity,
                                         finding overarching
                                         principles)

    (c) Evaluating own and others
        performance
    (d) Awareness of strategies   (audience for recording,
                                         summarizing, moving to
                                         new topic)

                        (Barnes and Todd, 1977:20-1)

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SESSION ONE : VISUAL GAMES AND PUZZLES

Group Discussion

1. A: Right, what do we think it is?

2. B: We can't really see, I think it's eh -

3. A: - Police bringing in a nun

4. C: Well there's two policemen

5. D: Nooo, a man and a woman

6. B: Maybe it's the police bringing in a nurse

7. A: No no (emphatic)...well it could be but I'd say it's a nun
        'cos you know the way they wear the-

8. D: -Yeah the veils and things

9. C: Yeah, I'd say it's a nun

10. B: Well it could be a man without his hat on or something

11. A: Wait now, you'll have to take a closer look...(pause) it
        looks more like a lady -

12. C: -Yeah her hair and -

13. A: -Yeah ye just have a feeling -

14. D: That could be a police car back there look

15. A: Or it could be a place where emm...something maybe
        happened and they're just bringing her up to that

16. B: Maybe it's a swimming girl, you know she has a swimming
        hat

17. Ps: (laughter)

18. C: No, no something must have happened there and emm...and
        she must have got hurt and then they emm...bringed -

19. D: - Yeah something must have happened and they, and they
        rang emm...for the ambulance and she's being sent in the
        ambulance (excited)

20. E: It might be a lady coming out of the grocer

21. Ps: Hah, hah, hah   (sarcasm)

22. E: Well it could be a robber who dressed up as a nun to get
        into the nuns place -

23. Ps: Yeah!   (excited)

24. E: - or something like that

25. D: Emm well that looks like a Constable, that looks like a
        Constable.

26. E: Well he looks like a constipated budgie   (laughter)

27.C?: Stop, stop, shush Daryl will ye
                                    (briefly untranscribable)
28. A: Okay, well you write so they'll be able to read it.
        'Police and nun going into'-

29. D: - I'd say it's a nun going into -

30. A: - Okay just write 'Nun goes to jail'

31. E: Nun goes to grocer to rip off someone   (laughter)

32. A: No wait, just 'Nun goes to Jail'. Will ye shut up Eric
        and Daryl, just be quiet the two of you; just be quiet
        for a change, would you   (annoyed)

33. C: 'Nun goes to jail', just write that down

34. B: But it's a man remember? Look at the nose and -

35. C: - Oh yeah, 'Man dresses up to be a nun'. Is that what
        we can write?

36. Ps: Yeah

37. A: Yeah, but just put 'Man dresses up as a nun'
                                    (pause - writing)
        Ok, what are we going to say?

38. E: Man dresses up as nun to rob all the jewels and money and
        silver and silver and stuff

39. B: But they don't really have money

40. C: I'm sure they get paid for being a nun

41. D: What about the Church?

42. B: But nuns don't get paid

4

43. D: I know but they still have loads of money and things,
        from the Church like

44. A: Ok, so he gets into the nuns place to rob all the money
        and jewels and stuff -

45. C: - and everything in the church, all the valuables

46. E: Let God forgive him

SESSION ONE : SAMPLE GROUP DISCUSSION

1. A: Ok what will we say she's doing?

2. B: Emm...

3. C: Well she looks like a nurse or a nun

4. A: A nun

5. B: Yeah definitely a nun

6. D: Drunk nun kicks doggy around the street

7. Ps: Nooo   (emphatic)

8. D: Well we could say she's drunk, couldn't we?

9. A: Yeah ok   (excited)

10. B: What's she doing?

11. A: We'll say a car crash or something
                                (untranscribable)
12. B: That's a policewoman and that's a policeman and she's
        a nun

13. C: Drunk nun causes car crash

14. D: Drunk nun kills seven kids

15. A: What does drunk nun do?

16. D: An 80 year old nun was found -

17. A: - No no, I'm writing the headline, what does the drunk
        nun do?

18. C: Drunk nun, drunk nun...emm

19. B: Causes havoc?

20. C: Yeah causes havoc...emm... on the A1

21. A: Ok em, yesterday this nun got arrested for drinking and driving?

22. D: No, we've got to make it more exciting or something

23. A: Well we don't have to

24. C: No just write this under the picture and then write the main...you know the way they have a bit of writing and then underneath they have the proper newspaper article

25. A: She eh...crashed into ...

26. D: Yesterday this nun she eh, crashed into three children and two adults

27. C: No, three children as they were crossing the road coming out of school

28. A: She crashed in front of a school and killed and injured many children   (writing)

29. C: She will probably be facing life

30. B: No, the sentence is not known

Man Dressed up to be a nun

Man Dressed up to be a nun
to get into the nuns place
to stale all the money and
the valuble stuf in the ~~church~~
church

Drunk Nun causes havock

Yesterday this nun got arrested for drinking+driving. She crashed infront of a school and killed and injared many children. Her sentance is not known.

A nun finds a woman dead, And prays for her when the police arrives.

Group Discussion

(Beginning of discussion briefly untranscribable)

5. **A:** Ok so they're caught down here by him, they're captured

6. **B:** Yeah and they say to this guy, they say to this guy that he has to let them go

7. **A:** Yeah, he has to let them go or something terrible will happen

8. **C:** Just say something bad will happen and then show them running away

9. **D:** Yeah they both get away and then -

10. **B:** - What do we write in the box in the front?

11. **A:** Our adventure could be that the eh...

12. **D:** Emm...exploring -

13. **B:** Yeah, exploring the sewers they come across a pool and -

14. **C:** - and they feel eerie eyes looking on them 'cos look at the eyes there

15. **B:** Where are the eyes?

16. **C:** In the corner

17. **A:** Look at all these people here, they look like traffic wardens or eh...look teachers and traffic wardens

18. **B:** Oh yeah. What're they doing down there? Maybe they're slaves and they're being hypnotized 'cos their eyes are - oh but their eyes aren't black though

19. **A:** No I wouldn't say, I wouldn't sayy they're being hypnotized...Look he's whipping them that's why they're down there

20. **C:** Yeah, they're slaves but ye see and they're digging for emm...coal, no no, maybe it's gold or something (excited)

21. **A:** Yeah he thinks there's gold under there (excited)

22. **B:** Yeah ok, so they say emm...up there it says, 'Exploring the sewers, John and Jane come across a pool'

23. A: John and Jane fall down a drain

24. C: Yeah, John and Jane fall down a drain...they're in the
        sewers and they find a pool
25. Ps: Yeah, they find a little pool

26. B: Yeah and she says, 'Oh look there's a little pool here' -

27. C: - And then she says, 'Oh it's got higher'

28. B: No, no she sayys 'Oh no it's suddenly got deeper'. It's
        got deeper 'cos look...

29. C: C'mon lets start writing

30. A: And she says 'Look they're digging for gold and there's
        the devil whipping them'

31. D: Oh yeah, 'Look there's Sir', their teacher

32. A: Yeah there's their teacher

33. C: Ok, just say John and Jane fall down a drain -

34. B: - they were exploring a sewer when suddenly they find
        emm..., they find, when they see...'Jane says 'Oh look a
        little pool'

35. D: 'Oh it's suddenly got higher, got deeper, got deeper'

        (Discussion continues for some time before continuing
        to fourth frame)

41. A: Ok, 'Meanwhile, meanwhile in the Devil's office or the
        Devil's house' write that

42. B: 'You must do your homework' (laughter)
        Draw a tv in there

43. A: And he says 'No! We want to watch Neighbours'
        (laughter)

44. C: Ok and then he says 'I told you that's bad for you,
        that's in Australia not here'

45. B: No write, 'I told you kids to do your homework now why
        didn't you do it?'

46. A: ' - now do it now!'

        (Discussion over dialogue continues)

70. A: He says 'What...who are you?'

71. D: Yeah, this guy's a slave but he's come to help them and -

72. A: - and he's trying to get the slaves out too

73. B: Ok, 'I'm a slave but I need your help to het out the door'

74. C: No, '...to dig a tunnel'

75. ?: No, '...open the door' 'open the door'

76. B: No write 'I am a slave but I need your help to...' write that

77. D?: ....open the door?

78. B: No, 'cos the door emm... the door's already open

79. C: to get, to get emm... to get to the door?

80. B: No, 'cos the door's already there though, just 'to get the slaves out'

81. C: To get the slaves out, yeah... and then put a handle or something

82. D: Yeah, they're all running out and then the -

83. B: Will we put two more pictures?

84. A: No, we only need one

85. B: But we have to see how eh... how they do it;like then she'd say, 'I have an idea' and then show the idea

86. D: Well just show what they did, Ok? 'So what do we do?'

87. B: 'I have an idea' and then she'll nick that stick and use it to blow up the door

SESSION TWO - SAMPLE GROUP DISCUSSION

1. A: They're walking in the wood and then this eh... fire started right? And then eh -

2. B: - And that's all steam around them

3. A: No, no, it's fire!   (emphatic)

4. B: Oh smoke, oh smoke around them

5. Ps: Yeah

6. A: No ye see they're there and they keep walkin' almost running -

7. C: And in the steam they wander upon a secret place

8. B: Look wait a minute, is that all steam? Is that supposed to be steam?

9. A: No look, they're walking on, they keep walking and suddenly they fall down. They're in the water, you see and all around them they hear -

10. C: - spooky noises and they...

11. B: If they're in a river how could they get (untranscribable)

12. A: Because the secret door is beside that river

13. B: Oh yeah

14. A: Yeah, it's only imaginary, only imagination really

15. B: So...so that would have to be steam then?

16. A: Not steam, steam wouldn't come yo there on you

17. C: Mist then

18. B: No, I think there's a big fire down there and there's all smoke everywhere, ok?

19. Ps: Yeah, OK

        (At this point the group develops a rough outline of
        the complete narrative before turning to the dialogue.
        In writing the dialogue students re-enacted the parts of
        the characters making use of intonation and expression in
        conveying their meanings)

81. B: Ok say, 'They're ruining our plan'

82. A: No say, 'They'll ruin our' (emphasis)
         I think this story's gonna turn out good

83. B: Yeah but it won't be right

84. A: But that doesn't matter, does it?

85. C: 'I told you no...no way' 'Do it or I'll kill you'

10

86. A: No 'Do it NOW'

87. B: 'Do it or your dead' 'Do it or your dead'

88. A: Ok write that

89. C: 'Get out now I'm sick o' the look o' you'   (laughter)

90. B: Just 'Get out now' This is gonna be good

91. C: 'Get out, get out and do it'   (menacing)

92. B: No we don't have time to change it.   Ok, meanwhile, meanwhile, and he says 'Where are we, where are we'

93. A: 'Run children, run away'

94. B: 'Run laddies'... it sounds more... 'Run laddies Run'

95. A: 'Why? Why?'

96. B: 'There's someone trying to capture you two' (excited)

97. C: 'They're coming to get you' and then 'Out   that   door quick'
         (Confusion as group work finishes up)

98. B: They wake up and it's only a dream right?

99. C: - it's only a dream. Just do a bedroom
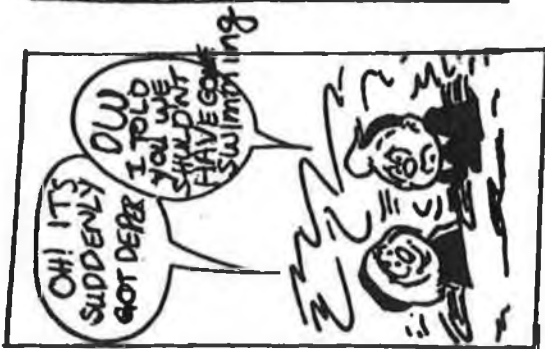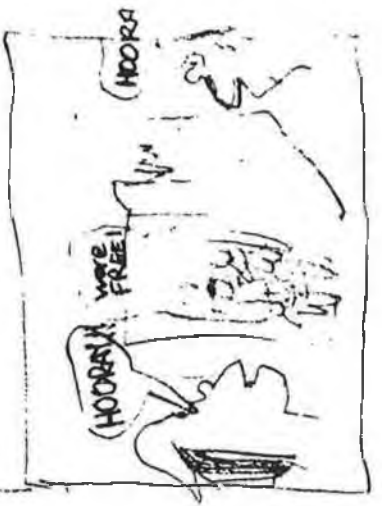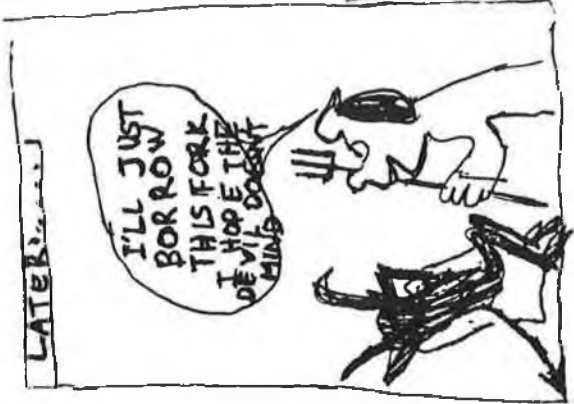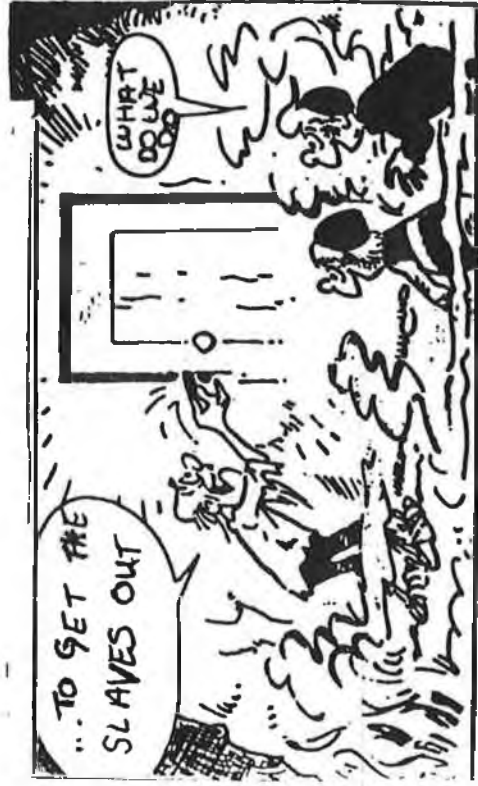
An adventure in the Forest.
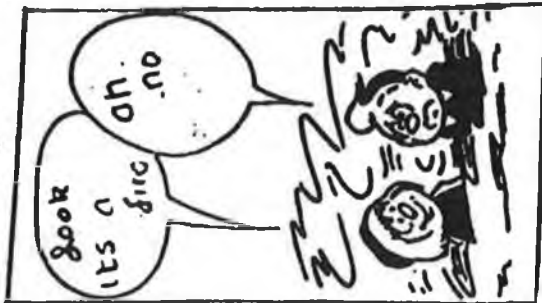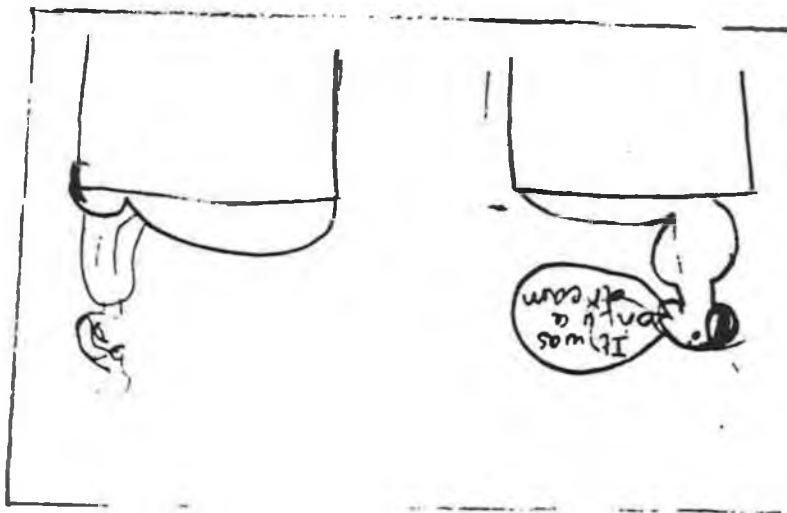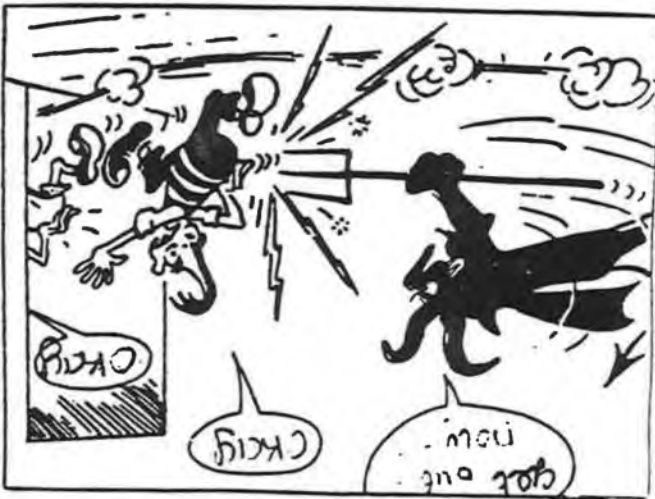
Group Discussion

1. **A:** Ok name

2. **B:** No, we can't just go straight into it

3. **A:** Let's think of a name first though. What do you think his name should be though?

4. **C:** I think we'll have it something to do with Joe

5. **B:** Ohh Glenroe, Glenroe (excited)

6. **C:** No, we're not doing Glenroe

7. **A:** Naah

8. **C:** Yeah, I think we should do Neighbours, something to do with Joe, let's say -

9. **B:**   - Oh no, I think we should do Glenroe because like the series is ended Glenroe so like something that happens then

10. **A:** Naah, so the Glenroe series is ended for the Summer so I think we should do Neighbours, do you?

11. **C:** Yeah, I think we should too

12. **A:** Do you think so?

13. **B:** I suppose so   (cheerful)

14. **A:** Now who's it got to do with?

15. **B:** Emm... well maybe somebody new moves into the street just pretend right -

16. **C:**   - yeah, and Joe, and Joe and helps Joe get over his fear of flying -

17. **B:** - look right, and she falls in love with Harold

18. **A:** Yeah, that's a good idea 'cos Madge is away

19. **Ps:** Yeah   (excited)

20. **C:** Yeah and, and Carrie doesn't know, Carrie finds out

21. **A:** Ok well what's the name, it's gonna be -

22. C: - Anne-Marie?

23. B: The name I think should be a pop-ish name

24. C: No, not a pop name 'cos like it has to sort of fit in
          with Madge as well, so Harold, 'cos Harold doesn't like
          those sort of names does he?

25. A: Marilyn?

26. P?:   No, no   (dismissive)

27. C: I think it should be something like emm... Alice or
          something

28. A: Yeah that's a good one. What do you think Lisa?

29. B: Eh, I think something, eh something like Marie

30. A: Naah, I think Alice, Alice Savage or something

31. C: Cooper, Cooper

32. A: Yeah, Alice Cooper

33. C: Like we don't mean to be mean Lisa but Cooper is a good
          name

34. A: Let Lisa pick the next one

SESSION THREE-: SAMPLE GROUP DISCUSSION

1. A: Okay right. What if Gail and Paul come back from, from
          America... But ehh, she's in love with somebody else?

2. Ps: Yeah Yeah   (excited)

3. B: That's a man Ok? What'll his name be?

4. C: Ramsey   (laughter)

5. D: What about ehh Robert?

6. A: Colin Reed

7. B: No Robert, just Robert

8. D: Age?

9. B: Pretty young. Younger than Gail 'cos then everyone will

13

be saying, ye know -

10. A: - 17 say 17

11. B: Naw that would make -

12. A: 20

13. B: - him tooinnocent sounding
       (Discussion continues as group builds up
       biographical details)

41. B: He comes to, he comes to Ramsey Street right -

42. Ps: Yeah

43. B: - with Gail so people notice that, because they're in
        love

44. A: No no because they like each other 'cos it could be her
       long lost brother   (excited)

45. C: Yeah a long lost brother and Paul and Paul gets the wrong
       idea -   (excited)

46. A: - and he thinks they're in love

47. Ps: Yeah, yeah   (happily)

48. B: It's her long lost brother ok? And he was in Ireland and
       Paul won't give Gail enough time to explain -

49. A: _ and there's a big fight

14

NAME   : April Bishop.

AGE   : 45

WORK   : unemployed

HOME   : none at moment

LEISURE ACTIVITIES : Drinking slot machines and dancing

PERSONALITY   : untidy reckless un orginised

OUTLINE   HOW YOUR CHARACTER COMES TO RAMSEY ST.   OR   GLENROE   AND WHAT ROLE HE/SHE WILL PLAY IN ANY CURRENT AND NEW PLOTS.

Harolds ex wife, she comes to ramsey st in search of harold She unemployed and drinking heavily and harold is the only person she can depend on for money and she ends up nearly Breaking madges and harolds marrige up.

NAME : ROBERT

AGE : 20 .

WORK : ~~Ott~~ ~~this~~ ~~business~~ none

HOME : ~~I~~ NEW YORK

LEISURE ACTIVITIES : chating up girls and
swimming

PERSONALITY : very easy giving and
dont careish

OUTLINE HOW YOUR CHARACTER COMES TO RAMSEY ST. OR GLENROE AND WHAT ROLE HE/SHE WILL PLAY IN ANY CURRENT AND NEW PLOTS.

He comes to Ramsey st. with
Gail because he is Gail long
lost brother. Paul gets the ~~one~~
wrong idea and gives them a
beautiful shiner.!!!!! Scotty comes
over and starts the fight

~~next~~ round

Both of them end up in

hospital

<u>Group Discussion</u>

1. A: OK so we'll start with Henry ringing Dermot 'cos he wants to get the roof fixed right?

2. B: Yeah but there's no answer, he's not in

3. A: Nooo, that's no good 'cos what do we do then? He rings him up and he comes over and Henry can't believe how much it's gonna cost, that's what we said

4. Ps: Yeah Yeah

5. C: OK we start with Henry in the first picture then, ringing Dermot

6. A: A close-up of him that's what we want

7. B: That's Shot 1

8. C: Wait maybe we should have the two of them, ye know the way they do it sometimes, like show Dermot as well on the phone

9. B: Like have the two of them in the same picture?

10. C: Yeah, draw a line down the middle or across it or something, that way it's not all on Henry

11. B: OK right, that's a medium shot then is it?

12. C: Yeah
        (Drawing)
        Now we'll have eh...just put Henry now and he's talking to Dermot

13. B: OK, then Henry says 'See you in 5 minutes' or something

14. C: 'So you can do it? See you in 5 minutes' How about that?

15. Ps: Yeah

16. B: Is that a long shot or a medium shot?

17. C: Make it a long shot 'cos we already had a medium shot

18. A: He looks like a woman

19. C: I don't care. It's only a sketch Elaine

15

Right Shot 3

20. A: Shot 3, medium shot

21. C: We'll make it Dermot knocking at the door
                      (drawing)

22. A: He's got a big body but it's just a medium shot

23. B: Just put a kind of a half-face in there, Henry didn't
         open all the doorway

24. C: Shot 4 emm...Henry opens the door

25. A: Is this a long shot?

26. C: No...there how's that?

27. B: Fine, now what do we do next?

28. C?: Right well emm...

29. A: Well it'll be a long shot and emm...do him looking up
         at the ceiling...(untranscribable)...'Pretty bad' he's
         saying, 'Pretty bad'

30. C: No we'll wait 'till Shot 6 for that

31. A: OK, shot 6

32. B: Right we'll have ehh -

33. A: - a medium shot

34. C: No, no, no a long shot

35. A: No, wait a minute, no a close-up, just a face 'cos we
         want to see just a face when he tells him

36. Ps: Yeah

16

SHOT 1. MS.
HENRY RINGS
DERMOT BECAUSE HE THINKS
HE IS CHEAP.

SHOT. 2. MS.
"SO you can do
it, RIGHT SEE
you in 5 mins."

SHOT 3. MS.
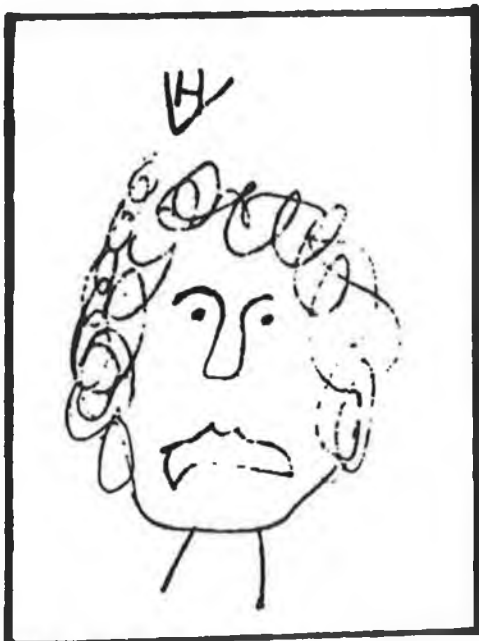DERMOT KNOCKING AT THE
DOOR

SHOT 4. MS.
HENRY OPENS THE
DOOR
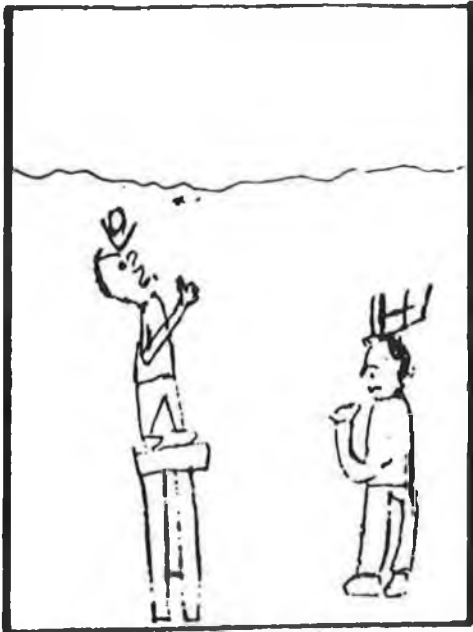
Shot 5 LS
Dermot looks at
the ceiling.
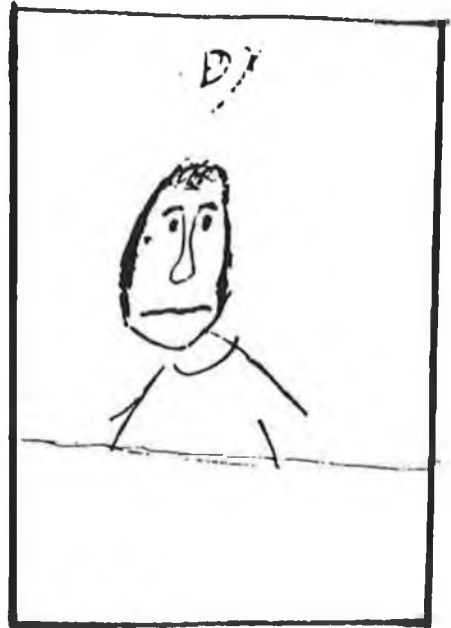
Shot 6 C.U.
*ABOUT £1,000.00

"THAT MUCH"
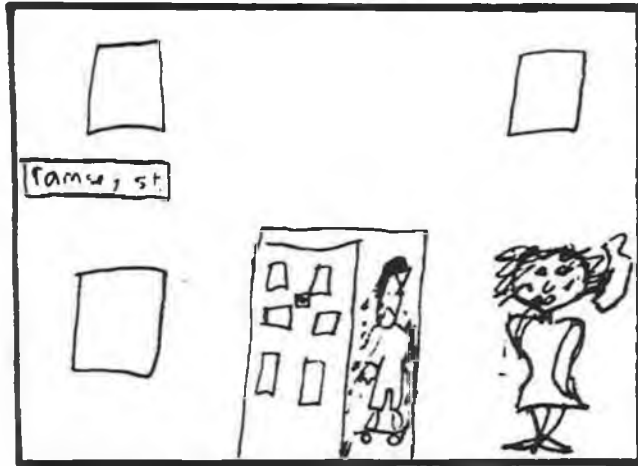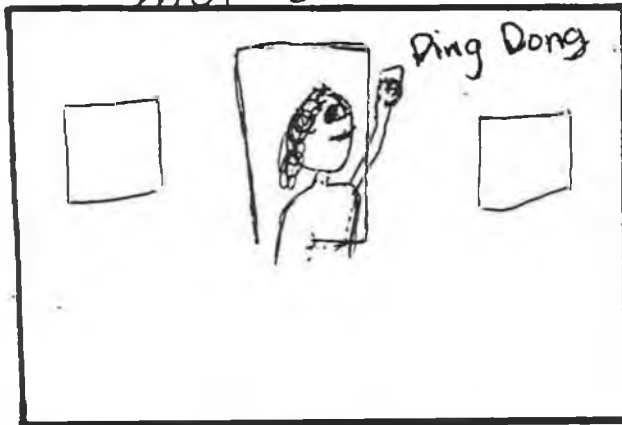

SHOT 7. C.U.

"CAN YOU START
ON
MONDAY

SHOT 8. M.S.

Shot 1
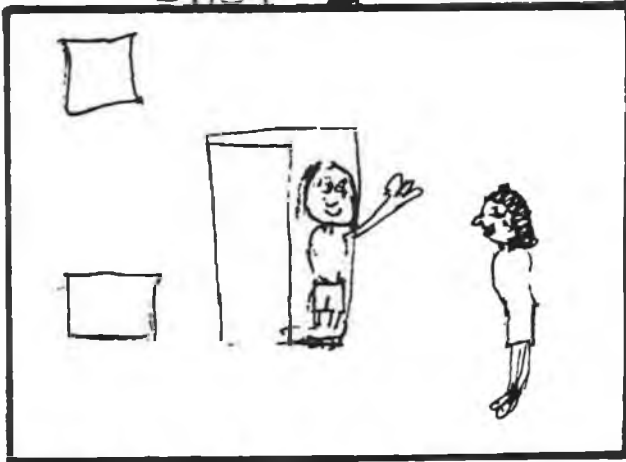

ramu, st

L, shot. an excuse me
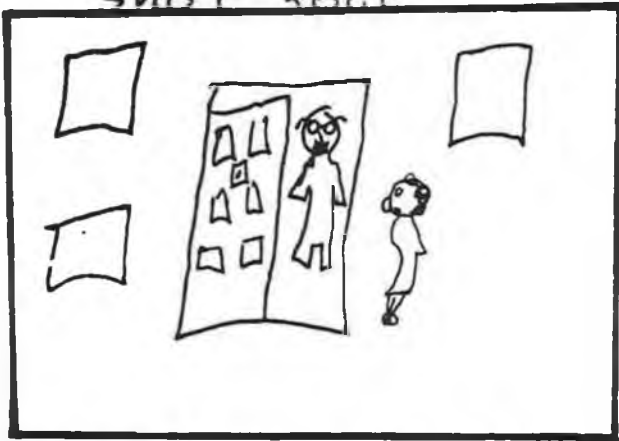do you know where. Harold.
Bishop. Rives?

Shot 3

Ding Dong

medium shot.
Ding Dong

Shot 2

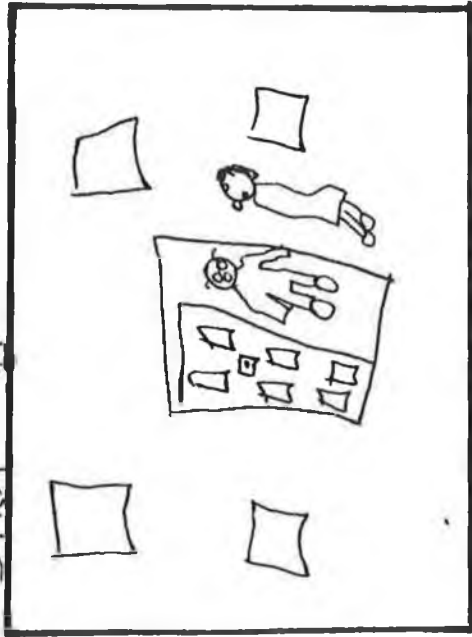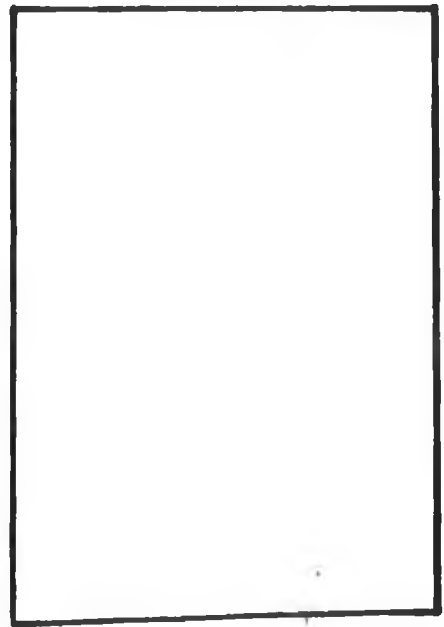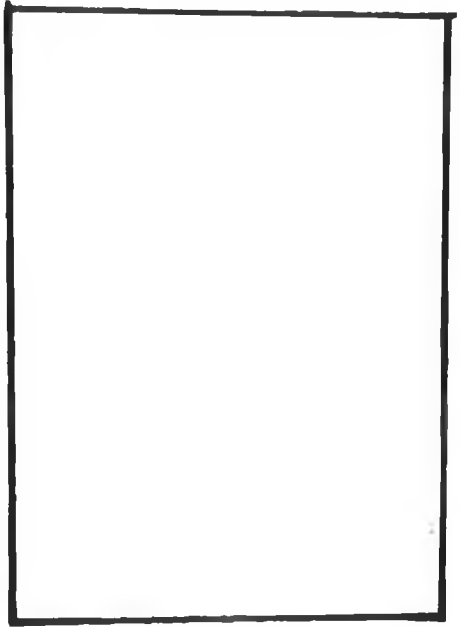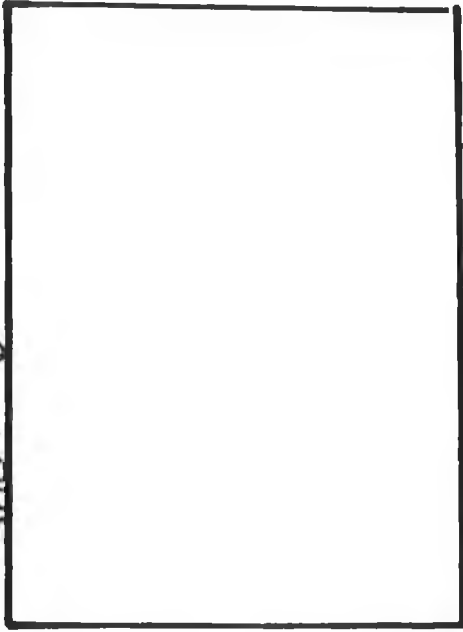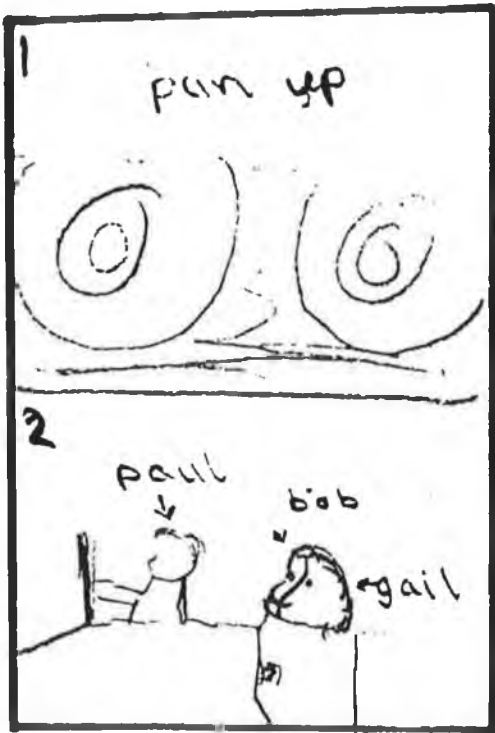L shot. Over there

Shot four

L shot H. it can't Be
A coughs ~~and say's~~

Shot 6

Shot 5

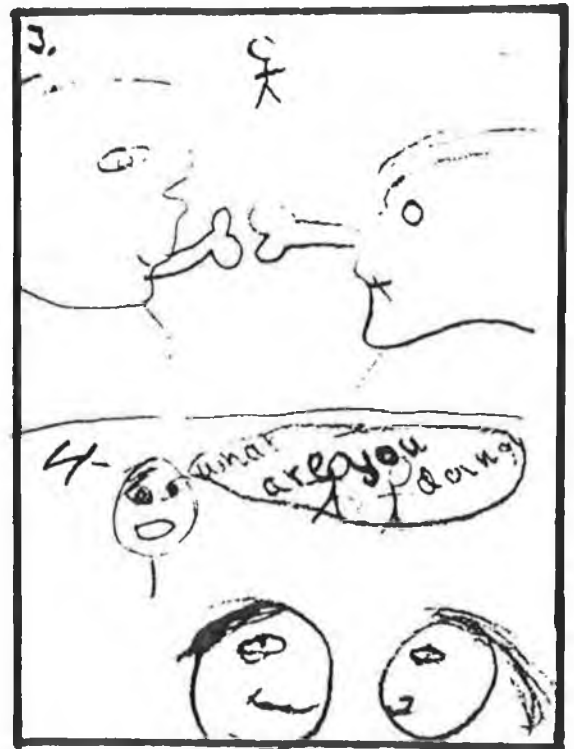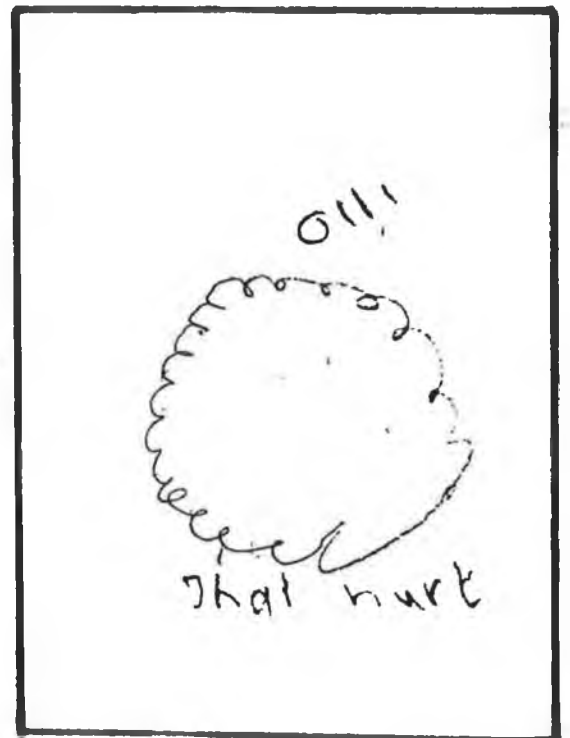6. shot es come in

In the car ns

cu

Paul: Nobody LS kisses my wife

Paul gives him a shiner

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