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Abstract: This paper attempts to examine what media education is and how it functions in the United States from five perspectives: introduction, a brief history, conceptual issues, application issues, and future challenges. The introduction lays down the reasons why the United States is far behind other English speaking nations in media education. The second section examines the history of media education in the United States from three stages: inoculation phase, facing-it phase, and transitional phase. The third and fourth sections analyze the media education from conceptual and application levels. Finally in the fifth section, future challenges facing the centralization and expansion of media education, from movement to educational intervention, and the impact of new technology are discussed. It concludes that a continuous reform is needed for the media education in the United States to reach a more satisfactory level. [China Media Research. 2007; 3(3): 87-103]

Keywords: media education, media literacy, cultural studies approach, inoculation approach, history of media education, media education theories, digitalization, online education

Introduction

While the importance of a new paradigm of media education is widely recognized for the development of democracy in the 21st century world of converging global media, the lack of progression in media education within the United States of America is surprising (Gregorian, 2006; Thoman & Jolls, 2004). It is ironic that as the leading exporter of media products in the world, the United States is far behind other English-speaking countries, such as Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom in every aspect of formal media education (Kubey, 2004). Galician (2004) even lamented that the United States is "a third-world country in this vital area" of media education (p. 8).

Kubey (1998, 2003) explored the reasons for the lag in media education in the United States from cultural, economical, historical, and political perspectives. He pointed out four obstacles to the development of media education: vast geography, cultural diversity, lack of catalyst, and different theoretical paradigms.

First, the vast geography of the United States, with 50 states comprising of about 3.6 million square miles, has inevitably led to a great isolation of media education, especially when each state has its own educational authority. The lack of proximity and interaction among the teachers of media education in different states has led to the creation of non-profit media education advocacy associations, e.g., the Center for Media Literacy and the Center for Media Education, which are established outside of the educational system (Considine, 1990).

Second, as a multicultural society, it is more difficult for the United States, compared to other English-speaking countries, to reach a consensus on the issues regarding media education. In other words, if the society is more homogeneous, it tends to be easier for parents to empower the educational authority to make the educational policy. For example, unlike the United States, Canada's first Summer Institute for the Study of Film and Television in 1966, sponsored by the National Film Board of Canada, was for media teachers across the county. The continuous development led to not only the establishment of the Jesuit Communication Project, which played a critical role in the growth of media education in Canada, but also to the formation of the Canada Association of Media Organizations (VAMEO) in 1992 that represented all media organizations in the nation (Media Awareness Network, 2006a, 2006b).

Third, as a producer and exporter of media products, the United States was deprived of the opportunity for having media as a catalyst for media education. Countries importing film, music, or television products are usually highly sensitive to the impact of foreign components that might threaten their cultural identity. Thus, in order to protect the cultural integrity, a country would try to develop a guideline or policy for media education. Unfortunately, the scarcity of foreign media products in the United States did not give it a sense of urgency, or need to "advance the cause of media education" as other countries had (Kubey, 1998, p. 59).

Lastly, the United States does not have an appropriate theoretical paradigm of media studies to provide the impetus and guideline for the pedagogical development of media education. According to Buckingham (1998), Leavis and Thompson's (1933) book has systematically proposed a model of media education for the schools of the early 20th century. Consequently, the development of cultural studies based on those scholars (e.g., Buckingham, 1990, 1996; Hall & Whannel, 1964; Halloran & Jones, 1968; Masterman, 1980, 1985; Williams, 1961) has become the guiding

force of media education for decades in the United Kingdom, and the influence was extended to Australia, Canada, and other English speaking countries. As a result, the cultural paradigm in other countries has led to a more student-centered pedagogical approach, which emphasizes the deconstruction of media content and the sense-making or interpretation process of media audience, while the United States still enjoys its inoculation-protectionist aim in introducing "popular forms into the classroom only to dismiss them as commercial, manipulative, and derivative…" (Masterman, 1997, p. 20).

Together, these obstacles draw a picture of difficulty for the United States to develop a coherent system of media education in terms of policy, teaching, and research. Although non-profit media education associations[1] and scholars[2] continue to collectively make efforts in promoting media education, the stumbling blocks of fragmentation remain a great challenge to be overcome. In order to have a better understanding of the situation, this paper attempts to further review the nature and state of media education in the United States from four other aspects, including: a brief history of media education, the conceptual issues, the application issues, and the future challenges.

A Brief History of Media Education in the United States

The burgeoning of media education in the United States did not happen until the late 1960's. Almost four decades later, Leavis and Thompson published their book, *Culture and Environment: The Training of Critical Awareness,* in Great Britain in 1933. From the 1960's on, the development of media education in the United States can be roughly divided into three stages: the inoculation phase, the facing-it phase, and the transitional phase.

The Inoculation Phase

It was in the late 1960's when the first-time teachers and administrators in the educational institutes began to realize that mass media would not just go away, they knew they had to do something about media education. Before that time, even Walt Disney was zealously creating American-styled fables and myths, yet the influence of media was simply ignored. Books were treated as the only authentic medium for students. Ancient literature and history was taught, and music classes focused on classical music.

In the first phase of facing the impact of mass media, educators tried to protect students by using the strategy of inoculation. The inoculation model stipulates that viewers are like a piece of white paper, on which the media can freely paint its images. Its concern was that the media produce negative influences, thus viewers and cultural values must be protected to avoid pollution (Halloran & Jones, 1992; Tyner, 1998). It was important

to view media products discriminatively by filtering out the "bad" media and fostering aesthetic appreciation for the "good" media (Thoman, 1990). According to Walsh (2006a), in order to inoculate students from the negative influence of media culture, teachers tended to use mass media in the classroom to show the silliness, and lack of value in media messages.

The Facing-It Phase

Since ridiculing or devaluing mass media did not help students or viewers at all, from the late 1970's educators began to use mass media to attract students to get into the area of studying the media. Walsh (2006a) indicated that a "suck them in" approach was employed in this stage, by which teachers used the popular media, such as songs from pop singers or clips from hot movies, to gain students' attention and then moved to the classical studies.

In addition to treating mass media as a tool for teaching purpose in this phase, the aesthetic appreciation of the good media was replaced by ideological questions about the media (Thoman, 1990). Training students to cultivate a critical view on mass media was gradually developed in this phase through questions such as: How does mass media represent "reality"? Whose "reality" does mass media represent? What interests does mass media represent? How are the programs of the media produced? What are the meanings of media programs? And how are these meanings produced? The research based on the sociopolitical analysis of mass media emerged in this stage as well, but this line of research was still notably absent from the educational curriculum in schools (Brown, 1991; Hobbs, 1994). The facing-it phase lasted about 20 years, until the late 1980's, when media education in the United States entered a critically transitional stage.

When teachers in the United States began to bring media into the classroom during this phase and to ask critical questions regarding the impact of media content and meaning production, the United Kingdom had moved to another paradigm shift of media education in the 1970's. Derived from academy, represented by Masterman's work (1980, 1985), the development of the screen theory showed a strong trend to apply "semiotics, structuralism, psychoanalytic theory, post-structuralism, and Marxist theories of ideology" to classrooms in schools (Buckingham, 2003. p. 8).

The Transitional Phase

From the late 1980's, media education in the United States began to show a critical transition. Teachers understood that both media and its viewers were producers of meaning. The interaction of media messages and viewers' belief, experience, personality, and background constantly produced a series of sense

making processes from the viewers' perspective. Thus it became important to empower students, or viewers, to critically process the media messages.

In this stage, more media education teachers and scholars in the United States participated in the worldwide media literacy movement and attended international, national, and regional conferences or meetings to share knowledge, strategies, research, and curricula of media education. The influence of these activities was enormous. The two influential international conferences during this time included the UNESCO's "Educating for the Media and the Digital Age" (cosponsored by the Australian government), and the "Summit 2000 - Children, Youth and the Media: Beyond the Millennium," held in Toronto, Canada in May 2000, which brought together representatives from about 60 countries.

National conferences and the scale and scope of media education were growing rapidly in this stage as well. In addition to the organized groups in different states, the Aspen Institute convened the first "National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy" in 1992, which brought educators together to establish guidelines for developing media education in the United States (Aufderheide, 2004).

Different associations were also established around the country before or during the early 1990's, and were actively involved in the promotion of media education. For example, the National Telemedia Council, a non-profit educational organization founded in 1953, presented various symposiums on media literacy education in the 1990's for teachers, researchers, librarians, parents, and media professionals in different states. The Southwest Alternate Media Project (SWAMP), based in Houston, conducted various presentations, workshops, and in-service programs for media education not only in Texas, but also extended to Massachusetts, New Mexico, Oregon and other states. Citizens for Media Literacy, a grass roots teaching and advocacy project was founded in 1991in Asheville, North Carolina. The Northwest Media Literacy Institute (NMLI) was formed in 1993 in Seattle as a result of the national conference of "Teaching Media Literacy: Talk Back and Take Charge." The Center for Media and Values was established in Los Angeles in 1989, and later developed into the influential "Center for Media Literacy." Other associations, plus programs in the department of communication in colleges, such as Strategies for Media Literacy in San Francisco, the National Alliance for Media Education (NAME) formed in Oakland, the National Media Literacy Project, and the Educational Media Center in New York all emerged in the 1990's and continue to be active in promoting media education (Pungente, 1994).

As for the curriculum of media education in schools, Kubey and Baker's (1999) survey indicated that the progress after the 1990's was highly encouraging. According to the authors, until 1999 at least 48 of the 50 states curricular frameworks contained one or more elements of media education. Four curricular categories were found to contain the media education element: (1) English, language and communication arts, (2) social studies, history, and civics, (3) health, nutrition, and consumerism, and (4) media strand. Among these categories, 50 states fell under the first category, 34 under the second, 46 under the third, and unfortunately only seven states fell under the media strand (Center for Media Studies, 2000). Although the hopeful signs of development in this phase are unmistakable, the media education goals are far from adequately being met. The field continues to face problems in both conceptual and application levels.

Appendix A, reorganized from the "*History of Media Literacy in the USA – Decade by Decade*" (Center for Media Literacy, 2002-2005), shows the major events in the history of media education/literacy in the United States, which can be used to supplement the short history described in this section.

Issues of Conceptualization

Issues regarding the conceptualization of media education are mainly related to what constitutes media education, which contains questions on the definition, nature, scope, and approaches to the study of the concept. Although more and more scholars have begun to reach a more consentaneous view on the concept after four decades' efforts, the conceptual ambiguity and fragmentation of media education still exists.

Definition and Nature of Media Education

Hobbs (1994) claimed that media education in the United States is "a child with a thousand names" (p. 453). Those common names, such as media literacy, media studies, visual literacy, technology education, and critical viewing, are all used interchangeably with "media education," though, among them, media literacy is the most widely used concept.

So, what is media literacy? Traditionally, media literacy was defined as the ability to analyze and appreciate literary works, and to communicate effectively via good writing (Brown, 1998). It was extended to include the ability to read the text of film, television, and visual media in the 1970's, because the study of media education began following the development of those media areas (Ferrington, 2006). However, the content or scope of media education has become more versatile with the continuous expansion of communication technology in the last three decades. The term "media" can refer to art, billboards, computers, film, moving images, multimedia, music, oral and written language, and television (e.g., Christ, 1998; Gardiner, 1997; Metallinos, 1994; Meyrowitz, 1998;

Sinatra, 1986; Zettl, 1990). Therefore, according to Cope and Kalantzis (2000), and Walsh (2006b), a plural form of "media literacies" or "multiliteracies" should be taken.

The variety of the conceptualization of media education/literacy can be demonstrated by the following examples:

"Media education, therefore, is concerned with teaching and learning *about* the media." (Buckingham, 2003, p. 4)

"Media literacy incorporates both knowledge of the structure, economy and function of mass media system in society as well as the analytical skills to 'read' both the aesthetic and ideological content of mass media messages" (Thoman, 1990, http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article126.html).

"Media literacy seeks to empower citizens and to transform their passive relationship to media into an active, critical engagement - capable of challenging the traditions and structures of a privatized, commercial media culture, and finding new avenues of citizen speech and discourse" (Bowen, 1996, http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/teachers/media_literacy/what_is_media_literacy.cfm).

"Media literacy is the process of accessing, critically analyzing media messages and creating message using media tools." (Hobbs, 1996, p. iii)

"Media literacy, then, is about understanding sources and technologies of communication, the codes that are used, the messages that are produced, and the selection, interpretation, and impact of those messages." (Rubin, 1998, p. 3)

"Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and produce communications in a diversity of forms." (Aspen Institute, from Bowen, 2006: http://interact.uoregon.edu/mediaLit/mlr/readings/articles/defharvard.html)

From these definitions, we can see that media education, though is used interchangeably with media literacy, can be perceived as the process of teaching and learning about media, while media literacy is the outcome of media education. The two most common components among the definitions of media literacy are the awareness of the multitude of media messages and the critical ability in analyzing and questioning what we see, read, and watch (Hobbs, 2001; Silverblatt, 1995; Singer & Singer, 1998).

Based on the conceptualization of media literacy, The Center for Media Literacy (2005; see also Kellner & Share, 2005) proposed five core concepts of media literacy:

1. All media message are "constructed."
2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
3. Different people experience the same media message differently.

4. Media have embedded values and points of view.
5. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

The Center also pointed out five key questions on media literacy:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

As for why it is urgent to establish media education, the Center for Media Literacy (2002-2003) indicated five reasons:

1. The high rate of media consumption and the saturation of our society by the media.
2. The media's influence on shaping the perceptions, beliefs and attitudes.
3. The growth in media industries and the importance of information in our society.
4. The importance of media in our central democratic processes.
5. The increasing importance of visual communication and information.

These items are resonant with the six reasons Duncan proposed at the Association of Media Literacy, Canada (from Bowen, 2006):

1. Media dominate our political and cultural lives.
2. Almost all information beyond direct experience is "mediated."
3. Media provide powerful models for values and behavior.
4. Media influence us without our being aware.
5. Media literacy can increase our enjoyment of media.
6. Media literacy can make a passive relationship active.

In addition, from another perspective, Hobbs (from Bowen, 2006) provided seven benefits to show why it is important to teach media literacy in the post-modern world. Media literacy can help people (1) to gain appreciation of and tolerance for complexity, (2) to make effective choices in a media-saturated environment, (3) to foster sensitivity to and respect for multiple points of view, (4) to skillfully construct and disseminate messages, (5) to be part of a valued, respected, functioning team and community, (6) to make effective use of family, community and cultural networks, and (7) to set meaningful personal goals for the future. These benefits are consistent with the five standards for being a media literate as specified by National Communication Association (1998): (1) demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the ways people use media in their personal and public lives; (2)

demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the complex relationships among audiences and media content; (3) demonstrate knowledge and understanding that media content is produced within social and cultural contexts; (4) demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the commercial nature of media; and demonstrate ability to use media to communicate to specific audiences (also see Christ. 2002; Chou, 2005).

Scope of Media Education

Regarding the scope of media education, Tyner's (1991) classification is still applicable to the current situation in the United States. According to Tyner, media education in the United States, like the blind person and the elephant, reflects a fractional nature of conceptualizing the concept, by which teachers practice only a small aspect of media education in different areas. After scrutinizing the nature and quality, Tyner concluded that media education in the United States could be organized into four broad and overlapping categories: protectionism, technology education, media arts education, and democracy education.

As mentioned previously, protectionism was originated in the developmental phase of inoculation, which aimed to arm children against the negative influence of TV violent content, by having teachers and parents play the role of gatekeeper to the curriculum. Although the trend of protectionism waned quickly in the 1980s, protectionist groups are still trying to restore minimum regulation for children's programs. Health is another area protectionists are working for. For example, the National Institute of Mental Health and the American Academy of Pediatrics have proposed guidelines on children's television due to the concern about children's mental and physical health. Moreover, as long as consumerism or commercialism exists in mass media, the wheel of protectionism will keep moving.

Technology education was formerly called "vocational education." The technology based education, dictating that the main purpose of education is to teach students necessary skills to gain employment after the graduation, reflects the long lasting mainstream view of education in the United States. This educational view of "job readiness" emphasizes learning by doing, and technology programs can satisfy this need well. Thus, it is not surprising to see that most major technology companies have educational partnerships with schools, through offering different free supports of equipment, software, training, or other services. Unfortunately, technology education often neglects to address the potential ideological impact of machines and their related operations.

Creativity and self-expression are what media arts education pursues. Media production programs are especially popular in this category. Through media production, students are provided with channels of creative expression, which in turn increases their self-esteem. However, the lack of critical-viewing training in this area seems to only function to keep students busy in self-absorbing activities, rather than cultivate authentic media skills so that students can be empowered and give back to their communities after finishing the education. Moreover, because media production programs are often conducted by outside artists or external institutions, it is not easy for these outsides supporters to fit the school culture. As a result, the programs tend to be marginalized within the school system.

Democracy education is the last category. Teaching students to be good citizens in a democratic society is an important goal most media educators aim to achieve in the Untied States. Efforts are made not only in the school system, but also extend to groups in the community, to foster students' critical thinking ability to discern possible distorted representations in mass media, and to push for the freedom of speech and presentation of diverse content in mass media. A dilemma of media education for citizenship in a democratic society is that it always needs to compete, or is in conflict, with the job readiness/technology education.

These categories well resound why media education in the United States is "a child with a thousand names" as claimed by Hobbs. They led Hobbs (1998a) to raise the following debates for media education:

1. Should media literacy education aim to protect children and young people from negative media influences?

2. Should media production be an essential feature of media literacy education?

3. Should media literacy focus on popular culture texts?

4. Should media literacy have a more explicit political and ideological agenda?

5. Should media literacy be focused on school-based K-12 educational environments?

6. Should media literacy be taught as a specialist subject or integrated within the context of existing subjects?

7. Should media literacy initiatives be supported financially by media organizations?

Approaches to Media Education

There are two incompatible philosophical perspectives that guide the development of media education in the United States: the cultural studies approach, and the inoculation approach (Scharrer, 2002/2003). Theories, studies, and discussions of media education are conceived differently based on the alignment with one or the other of these two perspectives.

The cultural studies approach emphasizes students' experiences with media (Buckingham, 1998; Collins, 1992; Hart, 1997; Masterman, 1985). Pedagogically, it not only involves more student-centered and sense-making processes, but it also tries to increase students' pleasures in media experience. In addition, the approach mainly concerns the representation of media and aims to denaturalize the media. Opponents in this camp tend to oppose the instructor's intervention in the students' learning process of media education. As mentioned previously, this perspective is commonly adopted in other English-speaking nations. It only began to influence the media education in the United States in the early 1990's.

The second philosophical perspective, the inoculation approach, has been dominating the media education in the United States since the early stage and continues to exert its influence nowadays. The inoculation approach, also called impact mediation (Anderson, 1983) or interventionism, tends to place emphasis on the negative aspects of the media, such as sex, violence, or manipulation in advertising, and treats media education as a tool to prevent young people or viewers from being harmfully affected by the media (Hobbs, 1998, 2004). This camp assumes that after the treatment of media literacy education, people will be less influenced after exposure to media (Husemann, et. al., 1983; Piette & Giroux, 1997). While the inoculation approach was largely left behind almost 40 years ago in Great Britain, the trend continues to flush in the United States, especially under the condition that it is much easier to get funding from government agencies and community groups, and it is more likely to be approved by parents and administrators (Kubey, 1998).

Issues of Application

Issues regarding the application of media education are mainly about how to design and deliver media education curriculum, and how to assess, or evaluate, the media education programs (Christ & Potter, 1998).

Design and Delivery of Media Education

How media education should fit into the curriculum in K-12 and higher education has been a long debated issue (e.g., Buckingham, 2003; Hart, 1997; Hobbs, 2004; Quin & McMahon, 1997; Sholle & Denski, 1994; Tyner, 1998). The design of media education in the United States is often suffering from the competition between the goals of helping students get a job and training them to be a more critical citizen for the democratic society. The pressure is especially great in higher education to not teach student's media production and writing skills for the employment purpose. Thus, because in modern society media intertwines with every aspect of human life, while helping students to be skillful practitioners, how to teach them to become a media literate citizen

and consumer becomes a critical question to be answered. In other words, for media education, it needs to teach not only with media, but also teach about media (Hobbs, 1994).

Teaching with media is reflected in the instructional method of "practical work," which provides "hands-on activities that give students experience in designing, creating, and producing a media message to experience how these concepts get articulated in practice." Also, teaching about media refers to the method of "textual reading" of "media products, using key concepts of representations, audience, institutions, genre, and other concepts to deconstruct and provide negotiated or oppositional readings to media texts" (Hobbs, 1994, p. 460). According to Hobbs, the textual reading method is commonly used in language arts, English, and social studies classes in the United States, and the practical work method in journalism and media production classes. Courses based on the practical work method are designed for non-college bound, or less intellectually competitive students in most US American high schools.

Thoman (1993) pointed out that the "textual reading" method requires media education teachers to help students learn to ask five questions regarding any media message (From http://www.medialit.org/ reading_room/ article1.html):

1. Who created this message and why are they sending it?
2. What techniques are being used to attract my attention?
3. What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in the message?
4. How might different people understand this message differently from me?
5. What is omitted from this message?

In other words, media education must be the "pedagogy of inquiry," focusing "on the act of asking questions about media texts" (Hobbs, 1998a, p. 27).

More specifically, the "textual reading" teaching method can be further embedded in ten classroom approaches advocated by the Ontario Ministry of Education (1989): the inquiry model, critical-thinking strategies, values education, cross-media studies and interdisciplinary strategies, creative experiences, semiotics, reading the media environment, alternative points of view, full-credit courses in media literacy, and full-credit courses in media literacy. Appendix B provides a summary of these ten approaches. In addition, Scheibe and Rogow (2004) proposed 12 basic principles for incorporating the textual reading method into the curriculum. The 12 principles are summarized in Appendix C.

Assessment of Media Education

The assessment or evaluation of media education remains an area that needs educators and scholars to

clearly define the term and develop criteria for measuring the outcome (Christ, 2004). More and more scholars continue to make efforts in developing media education standards for K-12 and higher education (Christ, 1994, 1997, 2006a; Christ & Hynes, 1997; Hobbs & Frost, 2003; Rosenbaum, 1994; Scharrer, 2002/2003), including communication associations such as the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC, 2004), and the National Communication Association (NCA, 1998).

Assessing media education is a difficult task. According to Christ (2004), the current assessment needs to focus on "what have students learned," rather than what students have been taught. However, although there are still no national standards on media education assessment in the United States, the trend has been moving beyond implicit assumptions about the effects of media education to a more explicit definition and measurement, based on the awareness of and the critical ability in analyzing media messages, as previously mentioned. The outcome of this "critical viewing" ability can be measured from aspects of knowledge, skills, behaviors, attitudes, and values.

For example, based on the five standards for being a media literate, NCA (1998) proposed different measuring items attached to each standard on the three aspects of knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes. Appendix D lists those items of the assessment. In addition, Christ (2006b) and Grady (2006) indicated that the student learning outcomes of media education parallel the following core professional values (items 1-5) and competencies (items 6-11) specified by the ACEJMC:

1. First Amendment principles and law.
2. History and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
3. Diversity groups in a global society in relation to communications.
4. Theories in use and presentation of images and information.
5. Professional ethical principles in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
6. Think critically, creatively and independently.
7. Conduct research and evaluate information.
8. Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate to communications professions.
9. Evaluate own and others' work for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style, and grammatical correctness.
10. Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
11. Apply tools and technologies appropriates for the communications professions in which they work. (pp. 11-12)

All these values and competencies reflect the three categories of 21st century learning skills: information and communication skills, thinking and problem-solving skills, and interpersonal and self-directional skills (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2003). They also mirror Thomans' (1995) argument that media literacy is an overall concept that incorporates three stages of leading to media empowerment: (1) become aware of the importance of making choices of using media, (2) acquire the specific skills of critical viewing, and (3) going behind the frame to explore deeper social, political and economic issues regarding media.

In regard to the preparation of student-learning assessment plans, Christ (2006b) stipulated nine principles suggested by K. Hansen for reaching an effective outcome. That is, assessment plans:

1. Should include the unit's mission statement.
2. Should include the "professional values and competencies."
3. Should address the means by which students will be made aware of the "professional values and competencies."
4. Should reflect the concept of different levels of student learning, and the methods used to assess student learning should indicate the level at which students are expected to perform.
5. Should clearly identify which methods are deemed to direct or indirect measures of student learning.
6. Should clearly link the method for measuring student learning with the appropriate "professional values and competencies."
7. Should address the "indicators" of student learning.
8. Should articulate how the assessment effort will be staffed and maintained.
9. Should detail how the data collected will be used to improve curriculum and instruction. (pp. 13-14)

Finally, the assessment of media education outcome inevitably involves the process of measuring. Two common measuring methods used are indirect and direct measures. Indirect measures may include institutional data, surveys, interviews, advisory boards, careers, and competitions (Grady, 2006; Parson, 2006). Direct measures include examinations (Tucker, 2006), embedded "authentic" assessment (Irwin), portfolios (Donald, 2006), and the capstone course (Moore, 2006).

Future Challenges

The future challenges of media education in the United States can be explored from three areas: the centralization and expansion of media education, from movement to educational intervention, and the impact of new technology.

Centralization and Expansion

From the previous description of issues regarding conceptualization and application, we do see that the variation of defining the concept of media education, no

matter which name it takes, seems to be moving to a convergence of accepting media education as a process to reach media literacy. This aims to reach a critical view by requiring the ability to access, analyze, and evaluate media products, and at the same time acquiring the vocational skills for gaining employment after finishing the educational training in school. However, the implementation and evaluation of media education guided by a centralized or national policy remains a great challenge in the United States.

Unlike Australia, Canada, England and most European countries, which have a firm foothold of media education on the national level, it seems unrealistic to expect the United States to develop a national curriculum or policy for media education. Because the educational system in the United States is operated and controlled by 50 autonomous states, and is heavily influenced by the parents and community groups, a central mission, which could unite different interests and goals of the states, is simply impossible. Thus, whether the United States should search for an alternative way, such as using the parent-centered or family-based methods suggested by Thoman (1990), to solve this decentralized problem would be a question waiting for an answer from media educators.

The degree of expansion in terms of the internal components and external outreach of media education is another challenge media education in the United States is facing. Media education traditionally focuses on the written texts in English areas, but the explosion in information has demanded the expansion of this focus to other message forms (e.g., verbal, aural, and visual) from advertising, cinema, computer, newspaper, and television, and to cover not only written literacy, but also subjects like drug abuse, violence, pornography, consumerism, and social inequity. In addition, the expansion also refers to other disciplines like social studies, science, performing arts, etc (Allen, 1992). In other words, the concern for the expanding components of media education and the design of a possible cross-curriculum design of teaching media is another problematic area that requires the collective wisdom from media educators in order to tackle it.

The external outreach of media education concerns the relationship between the media educational system in school and outside groups, including parents, community groups, non-profit organizations, and business corporations (Christ & Hynes, 2006; Masterman, 1997). If the collaboration with external groups is desirable, how the classroom autonomy, teaching methods, educational goals and purposes, and administration policy will be affected by the influence of these outside groups due to, for example, different religious belief, the over-involvement of parents, and the donation of money, equipment and mentors from businesses, (Brown, 1998; Hobbs, 1998b; Kellner &

Share, 2005) is another future challenge of media education in the United States.

From Movement to Educational Intervention

As a social movement, the campaign for establishing media education programs has passed through its first stage of fighting for recognition, and is moving into the stage of receiving official approval in regional and national levels (Bazalgette, 1997). The progress of media literacy being accepted as a desirable educational goal is encouraging, but whether this movement has been transformed into an effective educational intervention is still questionable. Tyner (2000) pointed out that the fluid, urgent and dramatic sloganeering favored by the social movement still exists in the development of media education, and this kind of rhetoric tends to prevent educators from crystallizing rigorous and coherent rationale into media education. In other words, the language is difficult for educational stakeholders to understand and accept, thus the contribution to school reform in media education is discounted. Therefore, according to Tyner, how to articulate a clear purpose of media education that is compatible with the school culture is an effort media educators must continue to make.

Bazalgette (1997) indicated that for developing a sound media education program, five limitations appearing in the first stage of media education movement need to be overcome: (1) media education is the province of enthusiasts, (2) little evidence about learning progression, (3) diverse notions of media literacy, (4) gap between media teachers and media practitioners, and (5) lack of research and informed debate. Although the situation has been much improved, these limitations still more or less exist today. Similar concern was also raised by Aufderheide (2004), who pointed out that the current media education in the United States needs to answer four clear and urgent needs: (1) data – researchers need to get more basic information and facts to support the development of media education; (2) publicity – need to develop a coherent image and definition, so that a common platform for diverse projects in media education can be established; (3) infrastructure – need to establish a national agenda-setting institution that can network the diverse efforts regarding media education, and (4) productive relationships – need to build bridges with policymakers, community groups, and external organizations. Understanding these limitation and urgent needs may help educators face the future challenges of media education.

Impact of New Technology

The invention of new technology not only changes the way we live, but also generates a great challenge to the media education in the 21st century (CML Reflection

Resource, 2002-2003; Kubey, 1997). The major impact of new technology is from the digitalization of media (Abernathy & Allen, 2003; Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1997; Fischetti, 2000; Mammett & Barrell, 2002; Olson & Pollard, 2004; Tyner, 1998; Warnick, 2001). According to Olson and Pollard (2004), the dramatic nature of digitalization, especially its ability in blending and converging analog-native media (e.g., newspaper) or digital-native media (e.g., computers) is not taken into account yet in the US media education. The digitalization of media demands a new way of looking at media education in three aspects: new digital aesthetics, cognitive effect, and social effect.

Digitalization is a hybridization of print and electronic media in binary code, which converts analog to digital and entails an entire different mode of production and distribution. The study of its effects on aesthetics and audience cognition must be included in media education, rather than just focuses "on computers and the Internet, media native to the digital environment, and not how the shift to digital affects media that were native to the analog environment" (Olson & Pollard, 2004, p. 249). Those digital aesthetic attributes that influence media education may include interactivity, manipulation, the prepurposing and repurposing of content across media, deliberate creation of virtual experience, and sampling as a means of generating new content.

The cognitive effects of digitalization are embedded in the non-linear nature and the creation of expectations for content on demand of digital media, which directly influence the way students use the media. Lastly, "demassification" is the most significant social effect produced by digital media (Olason & Pollard, 2004). The traditional design for a large homogeneous group of audience will gradually disappear, instead, the digital media will launch specific, rather than mass appeals, by allowing the audience to select the media messages they wish to access. Media education has to consider what this shift from mass to individualization means to the culture and the democratic way of life in this county.

Conclusion

This paper overviews the development of media education in the United States from four aspects. First, the author describes why media education in the United States lags behind most English-speaking countries. Second, a brief history of media education in the United is delineated from three phases: the inoculation phase, the facing-it phase, and the transitional phase. Third, the conceptual issues related to what is and why media education in the United States is analyzed. Fourth, the application issues regarding how to design and deliver media education curriculum and how to assess or evaluate the media education program are discussed. Finally, the author proposes three future challenges,

including the centralization and expansion of media education, from movement to educational intervention, and the impact of new technology, what media education needs to face in the United States.

Together, the paper draws a picture reflecting the past, the present, and the future of media education in the United States. Although the picture does not attempt to represent a comprehensive or complete landscape of media education in the United States, it shows that a continuous reform is necessary to improve the conceptual ambiguity, polarization, and fragmentation, and the operational inconsistency and incoherence in curriculum design and program assessment, while, at the same time, facing the future challenges due to the impact of new media technology. It is in this sense that the United States can kindle the hope of establishing a sound media education system and sharing experiences with and making contributions to the rest of the world.

Notes.
1. A sample list of active non-profit media education associations in the United States:
   Action Coalition for Media Education (http://www.acmecoalition.org/)
   Alliance for a Media Literate America (http://www.amlainfo.org/)
   Assessment in Media Education (http://www.readingonline.org/newliteracies/worsnop/)
   Association for Media Literacy (http://www.aml.ca/home/)
   Center for Media Literacy (http://www.medialit.org/)
   Center of Media Studies (http://www.mediastudies.rutgers.edu/cmsyme.html)
   Citizens for Media Literacy (http://www.main.nc.us/cml/)
   Commercial Alert (http://www.commercialalert.org/)
   Media Education Foundation (http://www.mediaed.org/)
   Media Matters: A National Media Education Campaign (http://www.aap.org/advocacy/mediamatters.htm)
   Media Watch (http://www.mediawatch.com/)
   National Telemedia Council (http://www.nationaltelemediacouncil.org/)
   Pauline Center for Media Studies (http://www.daughtersofstpaul.com/mediastudies/)
2. For example, a special issue of *Journal of Communication* (1998, Vol. 48, No. 1) was devoted to a symposium on media literacy. The issue covers nine articles from communication scholars exploring different aspects of media literacy. In addition, *American Behavioral Scientist* as well contributed two special issues (2004, Vol. 48. No. 1-2) on media education (Theme: "High Time for 'Dis-Illusioning' Ourselves and Our Media: Media Literacy in the 21st Century"). Media specialists, including practitioners, scholars, and educations in diverse fields, were

invited to express their views on two parts of the theme: (1) Strategies for Schools (K-12 and Higher Education), and (2) Strategies for General Public.

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Appendix A. Major Events in the History of Media Literacy in the United States.

I. Pre-1960: Early visionaries prepare the way

1. Marshall Mcluhan's revolutional work on media.

2. John Culkin first invented the term "media literacy."

II. 1960-1970: First experiments with media in schools
1. Early experiments in school television production started in the early 1960s.
2. The first TV studio in Murray Avenue Elementary in Larchmont, New York was established in 1965.
3. Iowa educators pioneered "Media Now Curriculum" in mid-1960s. Its Southwest Iowa Learning Resources Center (LRC) became a precursor of today's area education agencies and served as a community locus for an innovative film study program.
4. Ford Foundation funds experimental high school TV program started in the late 1960s.
5. A report announced that the "Screen Education" movement failed to survive the war in the late 1960s.

III. 1970 - 1980: Early programs paved the way

1. Church groups introduced "Television Awareness Training" (TAT) for parents and adults in 1977. The Viewer's Guide for Family and Community was developed.

2. *Media & Values* magazine began to chronicle growing influence of media culture and publish early activities for media literacy classroom in 1977.

3. The School of Public communication at Boston University, under a contract with the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and US Office of Education, developed the "Television Literacy: Critical Television Viewing Skills" curriculum in 1979.

IV. 1980-1990: Connection with outside media literacy movement

1. The "Grunwald Document" was unanimously declared by the representatives of 19 nations at UNESCO's 1982 International Symposium on Media Education at Grunwald, Federal Republic of Germany.
2. Ministry of Education of Ontario, Canada published the *"Media Literacy Resource Guide"* in 1987.
3. The 1988 Annual Report of the L.J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation on what are other countries doing in media education.
4. Len Masterman published "*Media education: 18 basic principles*" in 1989.
5. An international conference at the University of Toulouse, France in 1990, sponsored by UNESCO, proposed the new directions in media education, including the establishment of the "four criteria for success" in implementing media education in any county.

IV. 1990-present: Collective efforts, pioneering projects, curriculum connections, and the rapid growth of media education

1. The *Media Development* published Thoman's "An overview of the challenges to implementing media literacy in the USA" in 1990.
2. The Media Commission of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) met at the NCTE conference in Seattle in 1991 to explore and evaluate a number of issues central to the future of media education in the United States.
3. Aspen Institute hosted historic gathering in 1992 to set agenda of media education for the decade.
4. The Harvard University hosted the first US media literacy teaching institute in 1992.
5. The "Catholic Media Literacy Curriculum" was released in 1993.
6. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) published the "Skills and Strategies for Media Education" in 1993.
7. The "Safeguarding our Youth Conference," sponsored by the Department of Justice, the Department of Education, and the Department of Health and Human Services, was held in 1993.
8. U.S. Senate invited testimony for media literacy as strategy for violence prevention in 1995.
9. The first national media literacy conference on "Sows the Seeds" for future growth was held in Boone, North Carolina in 1995 (The second conference was held in Los Angeles in 1996).
10. Carnegie Foundation endorsed media literacy for young adolescents in 1996 (through the report of "In Great Transitions: Preparing Adolescents for a New Century").
11. The whole issue of *Journal of Communication* was devoted to a symposium on media literacy (1998, Volume 48, No. 1).
12. Partnership for Media Education was formed in 1997, and had first national media education conference in Colorado Springs in 1998, St. Paul, Minnesota in 1999, and Toronto, Canada in 2000.
13. Alliance for a Media Literate America (AMLA) was founded in 2000.
14. Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) expanded its language arts matrix to define standards for both "viewing" and "media" in 2001.
15. "CMLls MediaLit Kit[tm]," a framework for leaning and living in media age was published in 2002.
16. The "Learning for the 21st Century" report situated media literacy as 21st century skill in 2003.
17. The *American Behavioral Scientist* devoted two special issues (2004, Volume 48, No. 1 & 2) to the theme of "High Time for 'Dis-illusion' Ourselves and Our Media: Media literacy in the 21st Century".

Source: Center for Media Studies (2002-2005). *History of Media Literacy in the USA – Decade by Decade.* Retrieved March 2, 2006, from http://www.medialit.org/ reading_room/rr2.php

Appendix B. A Summary of the 10 Classroom Approaches to Media Literacy

1. The Inquiry Model - A structured framework that will help students recognize basic issues and provide strategies for developing subject content. This model helps to stimulate open questioning and encourages students to be intellectually curious about the world; it also demands that they have the proper tools for meaningful research and discussion.
2. Critical-thinking Strategies – It refers to a body of intellectual skills and abilities that enable one to decide rationally what to believe or do. It also includes a set of values: the pursuit of truth, fairness or open-mindedness, empathy, autonomy, and self-criticism.
3. Values Education – Assumes that the mass media are an ideal resource for the discussion of moral dilemmas, the development of moral reasoning, and the use of techniques such as values clarification.
4. Media from the Perspective of Subject Disciplines - In relation to media-literacy analysis in a subject context, it is important to stress that teachers will need to move beyond conceiving of media simply as audio-visual aids. Ideas that teachers can use to incorporate media literacy into their classes include English, social sciences, family studies, science and technology, visual arts, music, physical and health education, mathematics, and resource center teachers.
5. Cross-media Studies and Interdisciplinary Strategies - The issues, trends, and special events of our time are simultaneously reflected in all or several of the mass media. Hence, whether the topic is the arms race, the promotion of a rock star, an advertising campaign, or sexuality and violence in the media, a cross-media analysis is required. The effective application of the key concepts of media depends on the integration of several media.
6. Creative Experiences – Assumes that we should integrate formal media analysis with media production. Those creative activities can range from something as short and simple as sequencing a series of photographs to a project as complex as the production of a rock video.
7. Semiotics - It is the science of signs and is concerned primarily with how meaning is generated

in film, television, and other works of art. It is concerned with what signs are and the ways that information is encoded in them.

8. Reading the Media Environment – Assumes that each medium of communication has its own biases and ideology. When we interact with a medium of communication, we are influenced as much by the form of the medium as by its message. Thus, we should ask the following question about each communication medium: What would life be like without this medium?

9. Alternative Points of View - As a counter to the mass media, which are generally, conservative and constitute a major industry in which the profit motive is paramount, teachers, depending on the level of the class, can show films and videos that present an alternative vision or a different kind of perception and experience to that of the mainstream

media. However, these should be a supplement to, and not take the place of, the study of popular models.

10. Full-credit Courses in Media Literacy - These courses, offered at the secondary school level, will probably be presented as one of the optional courses in English or the visual arts and will reflect a great diversity of approaches. Examples of areas covered by such courses including pop culture, the world of images, the information society, the study of specific media or genre within a medium, and television production.

Source: Ontario Ministry of Education (1989). *Media literacy resource guide*. Retrieved March 10, 2006, from http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article338.html

Appendix C. A Summary of the 12 Basic Principles for Incorporating Media Literacy and Critical Thinking into Any Curriculum

1. Use media to practice general observation, critical thinking, analysis, perspective-taking, and production skills by encouraging students to think critically about information presented in any media message.

2. Use media to stimulate interest in a new topic by showing an exciting or familiar video clip or reading a short book or story.

3. Identify ways in which students may be already familiar with a topic through media by giving examples from popular media content to illustrate what students might already know about a topic.

4. Use media as a standard pedagogical tool by providing information about the topic through a variety of different media sources.

5. Identify erroneous beliefs about a topic fostered by media content by analyzing media content that misrepresents a topic or presents false or misleading information about a topic.

6. Develop an awareness of issues of credibility and bias in the media by teaching how to recognize the source (speaker) of a media message and the purpose of producing the message, and how that might influence the objective nature of information.

7. Compare the ways different media present information about a topic by contrasting ways in which information about a topic might be presented in a documentary, a TV news report, a newspaper article, an advertisement, or an educational children's program about a specific topic.

8. Analyze the effect that specific media have had on a particular issue or topic historically and/or across different cultures by discussing the role that the media have played (if any) in the history of this topic.

9. Use media to build and practice specific curricular skills by using print media (books, newspapers, magazines) to practice reading and comprehension skills.

10. Use media to express students' opinions and illustrate their understanding of the world by encouraging students to analyze media messages for distortions and bias issues of particular interest to them.

11. Use media as an assessment tool by having students summarize their knowledge about a topic in a final report that employs other forms of media beyond the standard written report.

12. Use media to connect students to the community and work toward positive change by finding collaborative possibilities for projects with community institutions.

Source: Scheibe, C., & Rogow , F. (2004). *12 basic principles for incorporating media literacy and critical thinking into any curriculum*. Ithaca, NY: Ithaca College.

Appendix D. NCA Media Literacy Standards and Competencies.

I. Media literate communicators demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the ways people use media in their personal and public lives.

Knowledge	Behaviors	Attitudes
1. Recognize the centrality of communication in human endeavors. 2. Recognize the importance of communication for educational practices. 3. Recognize the roles of culture and language in media practices. 4. Identity personal and public media practices. 5. Identify personal and public media content, forms, and products. 6. Analyze the historical and current ways in which media affect people's personal and public lives. 7. Analyze media ethical issues.	8. Access information in a variety of media forms. 9. Illustrate how people use media in their personal and public lives.	10. Are motivated to evaluate media and communication practices in terms of basic social values such as freedom, responsibility, privacy and public standards of decency.

II. Media literate communicators demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the complex relationships among audiences and media content.

Knowledge	Behaviors	Attitudes
1. Identify media forms, content, and products. 2. Recognize that media are open to multiple interpretations. 3. Explain how audience members interpret meanings. 4. Describe how media practitioners determine the nature of audiences. 5. Explain how media socialize people. 6. Evaluate ideas and images in media with possible individual, social and cultural consequences.	7. Create standards to evaluate media content, forms, and products. 8. Illustrate how media content, forms, and audience interpretations are linked to viewing practices.	1. Are motivated to recognize the complex relationships among media content, forms, and audience practices.

III. Media literate communicators demonstrate knowledge and understanding that media content is produced within social and cultural contexts.

Knowledge	Behaviors	Attitudes
1. Identify the production contexts of media content and products. 2. Identify the social and cultural constraints on the production of media. 3. Identify the social and cultural agencies that regulate media content and products. 4. Evaluate the ideas and aesthetics in media content and products.	5. Demonstrate how media content and products are produced within social and cultural contexts. 6. Demonstrate how social and cultural regulations affect media content and products.	7. Are motivated to examine the relationships among media content and products and the larger social and cultural contexts of their production.

IV. Media literate communicators demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the commercial nature of media.

Knowledge	Behaviors	Attitudes
1. Explain how media organizations operate. 2. Identify the social and cultural agencies that	4. Demonstrate the relationships between media	5. Are motivated to analyze the historical and current ways

regulate media organizations. 3. Compare media organizations to other social and cultural organizations	organizations and media distribution practices.	in which media organizations operate in relationship to democratic processes.

V. Media literate communicators demonstrate ability to use media to communicate to specific audiences.

Knowledge	Behaviors	Attitudes
1. Identify suitable media to communicate for specific purposes and outcomes. 2. Identify the roles and responsibilities of media production teams. 3. Analyze their media work for technical and aesthetic strengths and weaknesses. 4. Recognize that their media work has individual, social, and ethical consequences. 5. Reflect upon how their media literacy work relates to events outside of school learning.	6. Practice multiple approaches to developing and presenting ideas. 7. Structure media messages to be presented in various media forms. 8. Assume accountability for the individual, social, and ethical outcomes of their work.	9. Are motivated to appreciate how their media literacy work enhances self-expression, education, and career opportunities.

Source: National Communication Association (1998). *The speaking, listening, and media literacy standards and competency statements for k-12 education*. Annandale, VA: NCA.