

MAKING MOVIES MATTER – SEVEN YEARS ON

Making Movies Matter (MMM) was drafted at the request of the DCMS in answer to a need identified by the Film Policy Review Group in 1998: “that it should be a longer-term goal to create a more ‘cineliterate’ population, through education, in its widest sense, at all ages and levels” – with a “focus on schools, in order to reach out to as large a proportion of the future film audience as possible”.ⁱ A working group (FEWG) of 25 people from education and industry, chaired by Alan Howden, Controller of BBC Programme Acquisition, was convened by the BFI in late 1998 and reported in July 1999.

Key features of MMM are its acknowledgment that the aims of film education must be increased awareness, appreciation and enjoyment of film, and its demands for long term and sustainable change – hence its emphasis on investment in infrastructure. Urged to make a very limited number of “SMART” recommendations,ⁱⁱ the group identified 22 proposals which may not make exciting reading, but as stated in the Summary, taken together “they constitute a coherent strategy for change”.ⁱⁱⁱ The report was addressed to two key sectors: education policy-makers, and the UK moving image industries.

It needs to be acknowledged that, after the report’s publication, neither the DCMS, nor the BFI and UK Film Council senior managements, undertook any high-level engagement on the MMM proposals with either of these two sectors, and that consequently the inter-agency discussion called for in the report did not happen. Notably proposals 1 and 2, which were specifically addressed to the UKFC, were not acted upon.^{iv} There was no systematic annual review of progress on MMM’s proposals, and no national, multi-agency forum where strategic issues on film education could be addressed (although BFI did ask, in the UKFC’s first year of operation, for such a forum to be set up). One key sector that could not be addressed by MMM, since it did not exist at that stage, was the Regional Screen Agencies, but when these were set up, no steps were taken to help them take on a role in the realisation of the MMM proposals, and BFI Education’s^v offers to do this were not taken up by RSAs. There was a stronger commitment from the National Screen Agencies and BFI Education worked successfully with NIFTC.

This said, it must also be recognised that many of MMM’s proposals have been significantly advanced, some through the efforts of specific agencies, others through developments which have emerged through unexpected routes. For example, the establishment of Ofcom with its remit for media literacy was not anticipated in 1999;^{vi} nor was the European Commission’s decision to move responsibility for media literacy into the Media Programme (thus ensuring that it *does* include film education, as in MMM Proposal 3^{vii}). Developments in digital technology such as DVD and online services have developed faster and had more significant impact than expected on MMM Proposals 7 and 9, and

campaigns to free up copyright through “creative commons” licences has set Proposal 6 in a new light.^{viii}

As directed by the DCMS, MMM’s major focus was on schools, with at least 9 of the 22 proposals relating to this sector. Key proposals were 13, 15, 16 and 19, which all asked for curricular recognition of education about moving image media (several of the FEWG were unhappy with the group’s remit being confined to film and therefore adopted the term “moving image” whenever possible). These four proposals are all either achieved or well on the way to achievement, although here again the landscape has changed significantly over seven years. The curricula in all four nations do refer to the media and specifically to moving image; Media and Film Studies do continue to exist as specialist post-14 courses and qualifications – now with the addition of Moving Image Arts^{ix} and the new Creative and Media Diploma; and planning for revised curricula from 2008 in all four nations is taking on substantial elements of moving image education.^x

In addition, Proposals 12 and 14 have been pursued energetically by BFI Education and fully achieved, although through somewhat different routes than MMM envisaged. The model of moving image learning progression included in MMM as Appendix Two has indeed been published in two separate guides, available in both hard copy and online, and has reached thousands of readers, with funding from QCA and DfES (Proposal 12).^{xi} The National Strategies are now doing exactly what is specified in Proposal 14: “advis[ing] teachers to acknowledge children’s film and television experience, develop their understanding of it through classroom talk, and link it to text-level work” – but on a far larger scale than MMM envisaged, thanks to the short film based resources produced by BFI Education, reaching an estimated 500,000 children annually.

Although some UKFC and BFI senior managers imagine a high-profile policy breakthrough in the formal education sector, with a major DfES announcement that moving image media would be part of the curriculum henceforth, FEWG recognised that the government would be very unlikely to make such an announcement, given their terror of the press’s constant threat to mount “dumbing down” campaigns against any curricular reforms. The DCMS call for FEWG to focus on schools had not been cleared in advance with the Department for Education (then DfEE); the latter were consequently slow to cooperate with FEWG and only attended as observers. However, they did make the significant concession of adding the words “moving image” into the existing media requirements in the curriculum, as part of Curriculum 2000 revisions (Proposal 13). Seven years on and in a very different educational policy context, BFI Education is finally collaborating with the QCA to look at ways in which moving image media education can be more substantially integrated with the curriculum in England, but the prospect of a formal announcement of this by the DfES remains remote.

MMM does ask for certain funding to be ring-fenced to enable schools to purchase “training and advice to improve teachers’ knowledge and skill in moving image education” (Proposal 22); and (). The funds named by MMM soon began operating under different names and could not be ring-fenced by central government for particular purposes. Nevertheless, there was a surge in schools’ training investment in this area in 2000-2003, which has equally rapidly declined. This led to BFI Education’s “lead practitioners” initiative: training key personnel nominated by Local Authorities (LAs), who in turn committed funding to continued advice and training to schools: 44 LAs are so far involved and 130 lead practitioners trained: it is, therefore, the Local Authorities who are now ring-fencing some of their own funds to support training and advice.

Proposal 17, that moving image education be identified in inspection frameworks, and the intervention in initial teacher training (ITT) hoped for in Proposal 21, have been less successful. School inspectorates adhere very closely to high-level government priorities, with the result that moving image education is still not identified in inspection frameworks (Proposal 17) although Ofsted has maintained a dialogue with the BFI and commissioned short annual training sessions for its English inspection team, and the NI inspectorate was represented on the NIFTC/BFI Education Working Group that produced the NI strategy document, *A Wider Literacy*. Likewise, ITT providers follow the same high-level priorities, and although BFI Education lobbied the Teacher Training Agency (now the TDA) to fund ITT media courses, this was initially resisted. However, the MMM repertoire of skills was disseminated and a number of institutions are incorporating these skills in their training, and requesting input from BFI Education. BFI Education has now been advised that the TDA would be likely to agree to a combined approach for funding from several ITT providers, and is encouraging likely providers to attempt this.

It is widely recognised that research is essential in making the case for the value of learning about moving image media, and this is the basis of MMM proposals 18 (on research into informal learning) and 20 (on increasing the amount of funding for research into moving image media in general, and into teaching and learning about them in particular). The BFI did follow this up in 2000 by appointing a Research Officer in its education department, but within two years shifted the post holder into other activity. When he then left for work more commensurate with his abilities and interests, he was not replaced. BFI Education has nevertheless made considerable efforts to maintain a research function, successfully bidding for a number of small research grants and publishing a range of findings on its website; it has also recently assisted the BFFS in developing a research proposal with NIACE on exactly the same topic (informal adult education) as in Proposal 18. The UKFC has been investigating similar areas, but as marketing-led research into audience behaviour and choice, rather than the collection of credible data about learning. It remains a very significant weakness in the film education sector, that there is still no substantial

research evidence about learning outcomes and effective teaching strategies, in either formal or informal contexts.

Research was also a key element of Proposal 11, which sought to make constructive interventions in the area of non-vocational practical production opportunities for children and young people, and BFI Education did undertake a nationwide survey of provision which made key recommendations for the stabilisation of this sector and the benchmarking of standards.^{xii} Meanwhile the UKFC proceeded with its own initiative for the sector, introducing a new funding provider, First Light, and an explicit link to vocational aspirations and the involvement of media professionals. No links were made between First Light and the BFI's research-based recommendations, and the much-needed networking and training of informal providers has never been established.

Similarly uncoordinated efforts have attended Proposal 10, which called for the improvement and expansion of cinema-based educational provision, and depended in turn on Proposal 4 (cinema ticket discount scheme for students) and Proposal 5 (reduced film hire charges for student-only screenings). Like so many of MMM's proposals, these were left to agencies at operational, rather than policy, level, (BFI Education, Film Education, venues and film societies) each subject to conflicting and rapidly changing policy demands that made cooperation difficult. Proposals 4 and 5 were swiftly disposed of by the industry, particularly the non-mainstream sectors who saw their revenue being put at risk. Proposal 10 thus became a vague injunction which has been followed by Film Education, BFI Education and the venue education officers. These three, together with some RSA officers, are now linked through the unfunded and unmanaged self-help network "movIES" (Moving Image Education Specialists), while UKFC funding is directed towards "audience development" (otherwise known as "marketing") for "specialist cinema". Finally in 2006, efforts are being made to revisit this sorry confusion, with Film Education's student card scheme, which may or may not be allowed adequate time to grow, and with the UKFC's promise to renegotiate a blanket licence agreement that would enable schools and other education providers to offer legal screenings outside curriculum time, on payment of a small annual fee, after-school screenings may grow. The potential of the Digital Screen Network to extend opportunities for learning about film has yet to be proven, although it clearly makes student-only screenings a much more manageable proposition, in economic terms at least.

So was *Making Movies Matter* a success? Sadly, the answer can only be "partially and belatedly". But now that the BFI and UKFC recognise the urgency of rationalising and coordinating their approach to education before the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review, there is an opportune moment to reconsider MMM's key principles. Those involved in the ongoing national strategy development would do well to read the MMM summary on page 2 and consider what, if anything, has really changed since 1999 in terms of its key advocacy messages. These were:

- Recognition by the education sector, that critical and creative moving image skills will be a key element of literacy in the 21st century.
- Recognition by the moving image industry sector, that investment in education is a long term strategy.

MMM could have been more successful if the UKFC and BFI senior managements had understood and engaged with the information and arguments underpinning these messages, had led high-level advocacy, and had demanded a coordinated approach from the UKFC funded bodies. There are no quick solutions in education, and although high profile initiatives may contribute to opinion-forming, they do not by themselves achieve sustainable change.

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ⁱ *A Bigger Picture*, DCMS 1998, paras 6.7 and 6.8

ⁱⁱ “SMART” is an acronym commonly used in business planning. It means: 1. Specific – Objectives should specify what they want to achieve; 2. Measurable – You should be able to measure whether you are meeting the objectives or not; 3. Achievable - Are the objectives set achievable and attainable? 4. Realistic – Can you realistically achieve the objectives with the resources you have? 5. Time – When do you want to achieve the set objectives?

ⁱⁱⁱ *Making Movies Matter* p2

^{iv} Proposal 1: all publicly funded film activity in the UK should include a relevant education component; Proposal 2: production of film drama, animation and documentary for children under 12 should be made a policy priority by the appropriate Lottery distributors.

^v A careful distinction is made in this paper between the BFI (where senior management or whole-Institute actions are concerned) and BFI Education, a small team whose efforts to carry out MMM proposals have been mainly unsupported by senior management (as noted in the report on BFI Education by Peter Bradbury and Associates, January 2003).

^{vi} This of course emerged from a different DCMS department, implying that “media literacy” relates only to electronic and broadcast media.

^{vii} Proposal 3: Media III should be lobbied to support initiatives in film education, including video publishing.

^{viii} Proposal 6 asks for amendments to copyright legislation; Proposal 7 suggests that digital technologies may support film education, and Proposal 9 asks for wider educational access to film archives.

^{ix} An AS Level specification proposed by CB and Ian Wall to CCEA in NI; currently piloting in NI and England, and expanding to A2 from 2006.

^x BFI Education has worked in partnership with other key agencies to maintain the place of moving image education within these policy changes.

^{xi} Fulfils Proposal 12. Over 30,000 hard copies have been sent out; downloads of individual chapters are now over 50,000 annually.

^{xii} Published by the National Youth Agency in 2001 as *Being Seen, Being Heard*, by Harvey et al.