

## **BFI Media Studies Conference London, 5<sup>th</sup> July 2006**

### **Slide 1: “Whatever Next? Media Learning 1972 and 2008” Cary Bazalgette – Education Policy Adviser**

Exactly thirty-four years ago this month, this theatre that you're sitting in now saw the launch of the first substantial public intervention in media study for young people. The Inner London Education Authority – the ILEA – and the BFI had been collaborating for a year to plan and set up a Sixth Form Film Study Course, and the launch for teachers was held here in July 1972. You can see from this slide what the scope and scale was.

- 1972 – 1985, 2 terms a year
- 500 sixth formers, 38 schools, annually
- NFT screenings on alternate weeks
- School based study on alternate weeks
- Free materials - print and 35mm slides of frame stills - provided by BFI/ILEA

God knows what this course cost! Those were the days when we didn't have to charge staff time and overheads to projects, and when ILEA was happily operating a free loan service of 16mm films to schools. I was then teaching at Holloway School in North London, but as a course team member, I was perfectly happy to attend endless planning meetings at the BFI in Soho, and to write reams of course content for nothing.

What else has changed? The NFT screenings were all free, and of course one of the reasons for running the course partly in a cinema and partly in schools was that film study at that time was entirely dependent on 16mm film, of which there were limited numbers of prints, and to operate a 16mm projector you were supposed to attend a 10-week course at Wandsworth Technical College, though you could tell, from the condition of the films when you got them, how many teachers hadn't bothered to get that training. Teaching about television, if it happened at all, was limited to asking your students to watch something and then following it up in the next lesson. You could buy an extremely expensive video tape recorder – I mean reel to reel tape – to record TV off air and play it back, but I never met anyone who'd attempted to use that in a classroom – not more than once, anyway.

Many other things about that course seem strange now. The screenings and materials were all paid for by the taxpayer, not sponsored by the industry. We

could ask schools to timetable an afternoon a week for sixth formers to attend a course with no qualification at the end of it; Teachers did it without any prior training; we showed four black and white films, one silent and two with subtitles, in the first term; and on a more negative note, the films were all relentlessly male-centred: the concepts of representation and audience barely figured in the course.

But in other ways, that course was a portent of things to come. The standard approaches then were film history, authorship and genre: none of these really figured in that first term of the course. Instead, it started with quite a new approach: a study of the mainstream film industry, based on Don Siegel's 1964 version of *The Killers*, with materials about the production, publicity materials and reviews, and the concept of the Hemingway short story as a "property", all provided for free. That idea, of starting a course with a look at the industry, marketing and the production process came from Sam Rohdie, then the editor of *Screen* magazine, but I don't think the we in the course team were very clear about why we were doing it. Here's part of an article about the course that we wrote for *Screen Education Notes*, which I think reflects that confusion:

In retrospect, the work for the first three weeks was less an introduction to the rest of the course than work of a rather different order. The material can seem to emphasise the commercial and industrial nature of film-making almost as a subject for study in itself, whereas its function should have been to help students register the fact that certain aesthetic givens arise from film's collaborative hybrid nature.<sup>i</sup>

It is that preoccupation with aesthetics in the context of studying the industry that looks strange to us now. The real work on ideology and representation as critical concepts came later, and it gave a sharper purpose to the study of institutions. As Len Masterman explained, studying media institutions is supposed to function as a sure fire way of revealing "the selective practices by which images reach the television screen, emphasise the constructed nature of the representations projected, and make explicit their suppressed ideological function"<sup>ii</sup> However, I think there is still a tension between different views of why institutions are taught about in media courses. The media themselves are increasingly eager to provide information and advice on their production processes and marketing, but not usually because they want to reveal their suppressed ideological function – usually the reverse – and teachers find Masterman's mantra not quite as easy as it looks, in practice. Maybe for many it has become "a subject for study in itself".

The following nine weeks of the course were all devoted to different aspects of visual analysis, based on films such as *Citizen Kane*, *Battleship Potemkin*, *Ashes and Diamonds* and *Wild Strawberries*, using the frame still slides and leaning on an early version of a semiotic approach, which the BFI had imported from Switzerland. The *Screen Education Notes* editorial at the time delivered a severe judgment: "semiology has yet to prove itself, in the sense of providing practical

tools for analysis more effective than those in use up till now.”<sup>iii</sup> It could in fact be argued, I think, that semiology has been at least partly responsible, along with the limitations of pre-digital technologies, for the excessive amount of attention that has been given in film study over the years to the analysis of visual composition and mise en scene, at the expense of due consideration for sound or editing. Nevertheless, semiology did become a dominant resource for the study of film and television for at least the next ten years and its key questions about connotation and denotation remain basic tools of textual analysis in media education to this day.

I’m not telling you about this course because I want to yearn after the old days when everything was much better – far from it! But I do think that in many ways that moment in the early seventies was a seminal one: it set in train some ideas and attitudes that, for good or ill, are still with us. So for the next part of this presentation I want to explore these a bit more, and say something about what I think their significance has been. I think it’s probably also useful to remind you that everything is historically situated and consequently subject to change: and that this applies as much to what’s happening now, as it applied to what happened then. So for the third part of this presentation, I will talk about some impending changes that seem quite likely to affect what you are teaching now.

So what was the impact of the ILEA course on teachers at the time? The dominant modes of film study at that time – historical overview, or studies of authorship and genre – were essentially derived from critical practice in the arts generally, especially English Literature. The dominant uses of film in schools, insofar as it was used at all, were either as the film version of a set literary text, or as part of “theme” teaching in which a topic such as “work” or “conflict” was explored through a number of different texts. Any teacher of English or Art, with a liking for film, could manage these approaches pretty well, using the strategies they already deployed in their teaching, which typically focused on content.

But asking teachers to consider industrial production processes as a valid part of studying a text, or to take on the kind of dispassionate auditing of textual devices that semiotic analysis requires – this was taking them into what was then some very new territory indeed, and some of them resisted quite angrily. If you think about the key texts that had a profound influence on the teaching of all humanities subjects over the last 30 years, they were all published – in this country anyhow – after the ILEA course was written. So it was, really, ahead of its time.

#### **A Few Key\* Texts, 1972 - 1983**

John Berger	<i>Ways of Seeing</i>	Penguin 1972
Roland Barthes	<i>Mythologies</i>	Cape 1972
Raymond Williams	<i>Keywords</i>	Fontana 1976
Catherine Belsey	<i>Critical Practice</i>	Methuen 1980
Terry Eagleton	<i>Literary Theory</i>	Blackwell 1983

**\*short, easy, cheap – and influential**

So the ILEA course was just an opening skirmish – but perhaps quite a significant one – in what’s been a very long battle over what’s meant by the word “text” in critical discourse, and therefore potentially a battle to change the way the term “literate” is generally understood. It’s a battle that in some quarters is still very much under way. But the course also did more than this. It took the argument out of the books and the academic journals and to a much bigger audience: students and teachers in schools.

The original idea for the course came from Michael Simons, who’s now director of the English and Media Centre, but was then a teacher at Wandsworth School. He succeeded in persuading two major public institutions to make a systematic and sustainable intervention in education, using taxpayers’ money. The BFI and ILEA agreed that it could and should be their responsibility to find a way of giving more young people access to a range of films, and to ways of engaging with those films, because they recognised that there was public, cultural value in doing so. But I’m not sure we saw its full implications at the time.

Until then, all the development of the actual practice of film study in schools and universities had taken place within single institutions, usually driven by enthusiastic individuals. The ILEA course was a more strategic intervention, undertaken by institutions with a larger public remit. The course actually ran for thirteen years, evolving as it went, several thousand students went through it, it later became an examined course for CEE, and it influenced many other courses, such as several of the CSE Mode 3 syllabuses that schools themselves could create and assess; GCE O Level Film Studies in the 1970s and 1980s, GCSE Media Studies in the 1980s, and A Level Film and Media Studies. In both direct and indirect ways, it had a massive influence on a generation of young people, and in a sense it also influences what you’re teaching now.

But I think there are deeper motives and more important principles which were characterised by this kind of strategic intervention. Today, after nearly two decades in which British public services have been bullied into behaving like market-driven commercial enterprises, they are now anxiously poking and prodding at some dusty packages that have as it were been stuck in the attic all that time, labelled “public value”. The BBC Charter Review put it back on the agenda, but they are all at it now, like the Antiques Road Show: “Public value! What is it? Could it be important after all? What could we get for it? The ILEA course could be seen as a good example of public value in action. Public service institutions can and should do what commercial institutions can’t do: take risks. By that I don’t mean commercial risks, carefully calculated to be worth taking in view of the probable later earnings, but cultural risks, based on genuinely altruistic decisions about what might change people’s lives, offer new imaginative possibilities, different critical perspectives. There is obviously a very fine line, and sometimes no line at all, between that kind of public service ethos and a suffocatingly complacent paternalism. That’s why public service institutions have to be the focus of public debate, no holds barred, about what kinds of value their

services may be offering. But the terms of that debate need to be appropriate. Public value is not something to be established by consultants, or branding teams, or spin doctors; nor can it necessarily be tested by opinion surveys or markets, because sometimes its only real test is – time.

But the “broadening access” principle behind the ILEA course had even wider implications in the longer term. At that time, “broadening access” meant establishing specialist, optional courses like this one, whose success was measured in hundreds. But ten years later, the stakes were raised, as it were, by a Government report entitled *Popular Television and Schoolchildren*. A key and often-quoted sentence in the conclusion of that report was “But specialist courses in media studies are not enough: all teachers should be involved in examining and discussing television programmes with young people.”<sup>iv</sup> That assertion was made in a climate in which the idea of a national curriculum was on the agenda for the first time.

A fundamental principle of a national curriculum, which many of us hadn’t really thought about before, was “entitlement”. What was every child *entitled* to have as part of their school experience? What was it reasonable to expect them to have? What could realistically be provided? These kinds of question set in train a growing recognition at the BFI that its public service role was not being fulfilled by addressing only a minority sector with access to specialist courses – even now that’s only 6% of the age group, and it was much less then. We also had to think about the very different issue of a general entitlement for all 8 million 5-16 year olds. Did we think that all those children had the right to study the media in school? If so, what would that learning look like? At what age should it start? What kinds of investment in training, equipment and teaching materials would it entail? And how likely would it be that the Government (at that time, under Thatcher) would recognise media education as an entitlement? My career at the BFI has been engaged in trying to find answers to these questions. And of course the answers have changed as policies and technologies have changed.

What do those answers look like now? In a moment I want to sketch out for you three developments that look set to transform issues that were already there in embryonic form in the ILEA course: the status of media texts in our culture, the question of wider entitlement, the responsibilities of public service institutions, the role of the media themselves, and the function of specialist media courses in a changing technological and policy context..

First of all though, let’s think about something that’s changed significantly since 1972. Jackie Marsh and a team at the University of Sheffield, have done a terrific study of very young children’s access to media technologies, called *Digital Beginnings*. From this we know that over 70% of children turn on TV by themselves by age 2; 45% of 3 year olds can use a mouse to point and click; by age six, 34% of children are looking at websites on their own.<sup>v</sup> Children are used to creating their own “media texts” using digital still and video cameras, mobile

phones and audio recorders, and we all know that little children watch their favourite bits of films and TV programmes over and over again. Words like “obsession” and “addiction” are often used for this sort of behaviour – I prefer to call it “learning”. Children are studying the media before they can speak, and the technologies now available to them mean that they can control that learning themselves, in ways that have never been possible before.

With that as a background, I want to describe three ways in which the context of your work in schools and FE may be about to change quite dramatically. How much this may directly affect what you actually do is not clear yet. But I do think that you need to be aware of these changes because they may offer you some interesting opportunities – as well as some possible threats.

I’m going to start at a point rather a long way away, institutionally, from your students, and talk first about primary schools. In 1999 the National Literacy Strategy asked the BFI to organise a seminar for them to explore the relationship between print and moving image texts. With their encouragement, we’ve been working since then on developing and refining approaches to moving image study for children from ages three to fourteen, using non-mainstream short films as texts for viewing and analysis. Here are some of the things we’ve been doing.

- DfES-funded “Look Again” BFI guide reaches over 30,000 readers
- “Lead Practitioner” scheme with 44 Local Authorities has trained 130 people so far who will lead moving image media development in their authorities
- We have sold 10,000 copies of 4 teaching resources with short films to schools across the UK
- The BFI is contributing material on moving image media literacy to the new Literacy Framework for primary schools, for 2008

Strategy directors are telling us that they’d like to see all children in all primary schools doing three weeks’ film-related work every term. And we’ve got to this point without compromising on our central concern, which is that the films should be the central objects of study, not just used as a stimulus or a starting point for other work. This is the “entitlement” breakthrough that we started to think about twenty years ago.

There’s more. Last November, we held an invitation seminar at the Institute of Education to look at media learning in the whole 14-19 sector. The people at that seminar got very anxious about the five lines of activity that the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority were carrying out, all apparently completely unrelated to each other:

**In November 2005 the QCA were:**

- Developing the new Creative and Media Diploma.
- Developing subject criteria for Media Studies at AS/A Level — which could later include Media Studies GCSE.
- Separately developing subject criteria for A Level Film Studies.
- Locating Moving Image Arts AS/A Level with Art and Design.
- Carrying out a review of subject English (where the main requirements for media learning at KS3 currently sit).

We wrote to the QCA's director, expressing these concerns and proposing three possible courses of action, which took the issues beyond the 14-19 sector, to all phases of education from 3 to 19. This is what we asked :

**“Dear Dr Boston, How about....**

- **devising a broad, overall concept of what learning about the media can involve**, so that specific interests, knowledge areas, skills and outcomes can be identified in relation to the whole field, as well as being differentiated where necessary, and related to other subject areas?
- **identifying expected standards of media literacy to be reached by age 14**, on which subsequent learning can be built (given the increasing amount of media literacy learning now taking place in Key Stages 1-3)?
- **defining ‘media literacy’ as a portfolio of skills underpinning the whole curriculum**, not only as specialised courses (perhaps reflecting the skills identified by Ofcom and by the Charter for Media Literacy)?”

It took seven months for us to get a meeting with the QCA to discuss these proposals. But they must have been quite a dramatic seven months for the QCA, because there has clearly been a recognisable culture change there. The work that they are starting to do on curricular revisions for 2008 is really quite radical. They are working towards an outcomes-led curriculum, as opposed to the inputs-led one we have now: in other words, it'll be far less prescriptive, and schools will be encouraged to manage this in whatever ways they think effective, including the abolition of the traditional subject-led timetable.

And when we finally met Mick Waters, the QCA Director of Curriculum, with our three proposals, his answer effectively was “yes”. So we are now working with them to start a process that will address these questions, and will build the answers into the new curriculum – and I expect some of you to be involved in that process sooner or later. Meanwhile look at the QCA website in a couple of months time: at [www.qca.org.uk/innovations](http://www.qca.org.uk/innovations) and you'll see, I hope, case studies

of two schools who've built media learning into their whole curriculum. In the longer term, I hope we'll get a lot more on to that site.

The reason I'm telling you about this is that it raises the possibility, firstly, of children's media learning up to the age of 14 being substantially wider and better than it has been in the past, and that at GCSE and A Level you should be able to expect a new baseline of competences and knowledge. Secondly, there is the implication that instead of confining media learning in the 14-19 phase to bits of English and to the 6% of students on specialist courses, media literacy becomes part of everyone's basic skills. These things aren't going to happen tomorrow, or even the day after tomorrow, but I think you should be considering now, whether these developments are going to have an impact on your school or college planning, and if they are, whether you want to be part of it.

The second potential big change I want to tell you about is the new Creative and Media Diploma which will be offered to schools and colleges for teaching from 2008. I guess you all know the back story here: that the key proposals in Mike Tomlinson's exemplary report for the rationalisation – revolutionisation, even – of 14-19 qualifications were dropped just before the election last year. We are left with what some people feel is a dog's breakfast with yet another set of qualifications – the new Diplomas – being set up alongside A level, and the danger that the academic-vocational divide will continue to survive. Creative and Media is amongst the first group of diplomas to be planned, but compared to ICT, Engineering, Health and Social Care, you can see that Creative and Media is trying to bring together a really huge range of sectors and disciplines. Here's the full list, with the "media" bits highlighted:

#### **Creative and Media Sectors and Disciplines**

2D Visual Art	Drama
3D Visual Art	Dance
Craft	Music
Graphic Design	Film
Product Design	Television
Fashion Design	Radio
Textile Design	Interactive Media
Footwear Design	Animation
Printing	Computer Games
Publishing	Photo Imaging
Advertising	Creative Writing

Together with Jenny Grahame of the English and Media Centre and Ian Wall of Film Education, I'm on the specialist sub-group that's looking at the content of the Diploma, and in principle it's a fascinating process. To try and work out what might be the appropriate core learning that would support specialisation in both



Film and Footwear Design is an interesting challenge, or it would be if the whole thing were not being set up to an extremely tight timetable: it's been about six months in development so far and it goes to the Awarding Bodies later this month so that they can start drawing up specifications in time for you to start teaching it in 2008

The big unanswered question, though, is what kind of creature the Diploma will turn out to be. What a lot of people clearly hope it might be is Tomlinson by the back door. This is the statement of purpose<sup>vi</sup> and I've highlighted what I think is the key sentence:

### **Statement of Qualification Purpose**

The Creative and Media Diploma is a broad qualification that seeks to develop creativity and confidence in a young person's ability to think, question, explore, create and communicate. Combining academic and theoretical knowledge with practical skills and essential attributes, the Diploma is intended to provide breadth in learning and depth in the application of the practical and transferable skills. The aim is to give young people a learning experience where the focus is on the process, so that they emerge equipped with the ability to apply their skills and knowledge in a range of contexts, be it in higher education, further education, training or future employment.

You'll notice, I hope, that one word that does not appear there is "vocational". The Sector Skills agencies who are leading these Diplomas have all refused to create vocational diplomas. They don't want 14-year-olds to start vocational training; they want a broadly educated, adaptable workforce. Given that the 25% of additional specialist learning for the Diploma could be a GCSE or an A Level, and given that the whole thing will have enormous amounts of marketing and promotion, it's going to be interesting to see whether your future students, and their parents, are going to see this as a genuinely valid alternative, or perhaps even preferable, to straight A levels, and switch over in droves. Or not.

I'm sure many of you have already been to the Skillset website and had a look at the consultation draft that was published in May: what I can do today is to give you a little taste of the next consultation draft that's due to be published this Friday. Obviously there's no time now to do this in much detail, but I can signpost some of the directions it's taking, and I hope you will go and look at the draft when it's published, and make your responses.

At the moment the Statement of Content organises knowledge, skills and understanding around four themes:

### Common Core Themes

- T1 Creativity in Context**
- T2 Thinking and Working Creatively**
- T3 Principles, Processes and Practice**
- T4 Creative Businesses and Enterprise**

The main part of the Statement consists of two lots of learning objectives for each of the disciplines: one list is generic (so they're the same for each discipline) and the other lot – which are still at an early stage of drafting – show how these objectives would work within the actual discipline. Here's just one line of the learning objectives for Film and Television at level 2 (ie GCSE equivalent) – I know you won't have time to read this now but you can get copies of all the slides afterwards:

<b>Film and Television</b>	
<b>Learning Objectives</b>	<b>Range of Application</b>
<p><b>T1 – Creativity in Context – 15%</b> Learners will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Be able to adopt a critical perspective in response to creative and media products and practices</li> <li>▪ Know that creative and media production and practices take place in a range of social and cultural contexts in the UK and other parts of the world</li> <li>▪ Be able to recognise the historical development of principles and practices and the influence on contemporary practice</li> <li>▪ Know the work of a broad range of recognised practitioners</li> <li>▪ Understand the issues related to diversity and representation in the context of creative and media production and practice</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>In the context of Film and TV, this could include:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the history of film and television and the development of genres and styles of moving image texts</li> <li>- issues relating to diversity and cultural contexts, explored through the study of a diverse range of films, including European and international films</li> <li>- different ways audiences can respond and how film and TV seeks to elicit particular responses</li> <li>- the issues of representation in film and TV of individuals, minority groups and particular ideas or beliefs</li> <li>- the changing face of TV, in terms of broadband, interactive TV and broadcasting via the internet</li> </ul>

It's proposed that the way the disciplines are organised will differ at each level. At level 1 the proposal is that not all the disciplines will be offered, and those that are will be put into five topic groups, with media split between Moving Image and Digital and Interactive. At Level 2, which is what I'm showing here, some would be combined, so you can see Film and Television are shown as one discipline. At level 3, all 22 disciplines would be available as separate options in the specifications: it would be up to schools and colleges to work out how they'd want to manage the offer to students. .

So this is potentially a massive change to the kinds of media learning that schools and colleges can offer – and the offer is from age 14, don't forget. If students do switch over in droves, will they still get the kind of media learning that you think is important? Come to that, what are the essential elements of media

learning that you'd never want to relinquish? I suggest you think about this, and try to make sure they get into the Diploma.

Now for the last of the three contextual changes I want to tell you about. You may have noticed earlier that the term "media literacy" is slipping in here and there, and I daresay some of you will be saying, "for heaven's sake, we've had 'media studies' and 'media education', and now we've got 'media literacy', what's all that about?" The reason is that a few years back when the DCMS (Department for Culture Media and Sport) were being assailed by the "sex 'n' violence in the media" moral panic brigade they decided that support for educating audiences about the media would be a neat way of countering these accusations, so they turned to the USA for ideas and hit upon the term "media literacy" which is what they tend to use over there for a media education which is hugely dominated by a child protection agenda. Luckily the worst excesses of that kind of approach didn't end up in the Communications Act as responsibilities for the new regulatory body, Ofcom. What we did get was this [see slide].

### **11 Duty to promote media literacy (Communications Act 2003)**

(1) It shall be the duty of OFCOM to take such steps, and to enter into such arrangements, as appear to them calculated-

- (a) to bring about, or to encourage others to bring about, a better public understanding of the nature and characteristics of material published by means of the electronic media;
  - (b) to bring about, or to encourage others to bring about, a better public awareness and understanding of the processes by which such material is selected, or made available, for publication by such means;
- Etc etc

This may not be fascinating stuff, but it is at least usefully generic. And Ofcom's interpretation of these requirements is sort of unobjectionable, given that it is even more generic:

#### **Ofcom's definition of media literacy**

*'the ability to access, understand and create communications in a variety of contexts'.*

It's when you start to look at the examples that Ofcom gives<sup>vii</sup> for what media literacy looks like in action, that some doubts may start to grow. I've highlighted the bit that probably relates in some way to what you teach.

At its simplest level media literacy is the ability to use a range of media and be able to understand the information received. At a more advanced level it moves from recognising and comprehending information to the higher order critical thinking skills such as questioning, analysing and evaluating that information. This aspect of media literacy is sometimes referred to as 'critical viewing' or 'critical analysis'.

So, full media literacy is not for everyone, then? Only people who have got to the advanced stage can question and analyse what they see or hear? Once we get into a further level of detail, the agenda becomes even clearer. Here's Ofcom's example of what a media literate person would be able to do, which explains how you'd be able to apply your advanced critical thinking skills:

A media literate person should be able to, for instance, use an electronic programme guide to find the programme they want to watch. They may agree or not with the views of the programme maker, or just enjoy the programme. They may also recognise that the programme maker is trying to influence them in some way. They may interact with the programme using interactive features or by telephone. And they may respond to the programme by writing to or emailing the broadcaster with their point of view. People may also be able to use communications technology to create their own video and audio content.

So there are two main themes in Ofcom's version of media literacy. One is that you should be able to protect yourself from things you don't like in the media, or take steps to remedy them, and the other is that you should have access to digital kit. Although they're careful to say that you could express your media literacy by writing letters or using the phone, I think the subtext here is that, the more advanced kit you've got, and can use, the more media literate you are. In other words, one of the key books you'd need to help you become more media literate, would be a cheque book.

Now I'm not really getting at Ofcom here. They're doing the best job they can and they don't have a sinister agenda. But the version of media literacy that they've arrived at is exactly what you would expect if you gave responsibility for media literacy to a regulator, which is what the DCMS has done. It's an opportunity in many ways, because it puts media literacy into the sphere of public debate, but it's also a threat, because it offers a version of media literacy that is pitifully weak by comparison with what you're teaching and what the ILEA course provided all those years ago. It's weak on critical skills, and it's extremely weak on cultural entitlement: the notion that to be literate, you need to have encountered a wide range of texts. And it puts that version of media literacy into the hands of the

agencies most able to promote it to the population at large: the media themselves. So media companies are falling over themselves to get their media literacy brownie points.

Being media companies, used to quick wins and high profile, their first choices tend to be one-off projects, especially ones that use lots of digital kit, and even more especially, competitions. How many more filmmaking competitions can we cope with? Are there enough young people in the UK to enter all the filmmaking competitions now being offered or planned? And are media companies offering all these production activities because they want to “make explicit their suppressed ideological function”? Or are they thinking more of the photo opportunities at the prize giving ceremony?

Ofcom could perhaps establish some benchmark standards for more responsible media interventions into education. It could require media companies to work with education professionals to develop their media literacy projects – not just as window-dressing but really listening to them. It could demand that projects ensure a legacy for future learners by training teachers, and by looking at the transferability and the scalability of their projects. It's not enough to produce a website or a teaching resource and say ok, now we've trained teachers; it's not enough to put generous subsidy into a project for a limited number of kids and then to assume that others can do the same. Ofcom could recommend that media literacy project budgets allocate 5% of their costs to pay for proper evaluation of the learning that took place, rather than just collecting grateful fan mail. Ofcom could be taking a much more critical look at the extent to which such interventions are in fact covert promotions of media products. I'm glad to say that one corporation at least is now trying to work in this way, and that's the BBC with their National News Day for Year 8 students in March next year. So maybe standards like these will evolve – but a bit of pressure might be appropriate, too.

Before the Communications Acts was published, the BFI and the UK Film Council started to look at ways we might be able to advocate a wider and more empowering version of media literacy and still keep the media industries on board.

A Media Literacy Task Force was set up with the UK Film Council, BFI, Channel Four, Skillset and the BBC included as members, which has drawn up a Charter for Media Literacy. Some extravagant claims have been made for this Charter, but its effectiveness will depend on the use people want to make of it: it's not a group manifesto or a membership organisation. It has the potential to build a consensus around an agreed version of media literacy, which is tougher and more precise than the Ofcom one. Here's what it says about being media literate. The red bits are the ones that take the definition considerably beyond the Ofcom one. It's a more socially and politically aware document, and one that recognises a far more active role for media users.

**We believe that media literate people should be able to:**

- Use media technologies effectively to access, store, retrieve and share content to meet their individual and community needs and interests;
- Gain access to, and make informed choices about, a wide range of media forms and content from different cultural and institutional sources;
- Understand how and why media content is produced;
- Analyse critically the techniques, languages and conventions used by the media, and the messages they convey;
- Use media creatively to express and communicate ideas, information and opinions;
- Identify, and avoid or challenge, media content and services that may be unsolicited, offensive or harmful;
- Make effective use of media in the exercise of their democratic rights and civic responsibilities.

The other thing the Charter does is to insist on a balanced version of media education, which takes account of cultural and critical as well as creative entitlements. Here's how this is expressed:

**We will contribute to the development of a media literate European population by offering, or enabling others to offer, opportunities for people to:**

- Broaden their experience of different kinds of media form and content;
- Develop critical skills in analysing and assessing the media;
- Develop creative skills in using media for expression and communication, and participation in public debate.

The Charter has also been taken up by a number of institutions across Europe, including several of those that we worked with on the international conference in Belfast in 2004, and the Charter now has its own website, where you can go to find out more about the Charter and sign it online<sup>viii</sup>. There are over 60 signatories now, from a huge range of countries and organisations, but perhaps the most interesting thing about it in the European context is that the planning for the next phase of the European Commission's Media Programme is taking account of the Charter.

There's a Committee of media literacy experts (which David Buckingham and I are both on) which I hope will be successful in building into the Media programme the kinds of standards for media projects that I suggested earlier for adoption by Ofcom. So if you go to the website, and see some of the other organisations and people registered on the site, bear in mind that there could be European funding available from next year to pay for media literacy activities, exchanges and research undertaken in partnership with other countries.

To sum up then: as media teachers the context in which you're working is currently subject to change from three directions: Developments in the pre-14 and core curriculum which could change the level and quality of the prior learning that your students bring to Film and Media Studies; the Creative and Media Diploma which might present a more attractive alternative to the types of student who now do AS/A level; and the arrival of "media literacy" in the public sphere, with the potential both to limit and to enhance the status of Film and Media Studies.

Are these opportunities or are they threats? Well, there are some interesting moves under way which could help to answer that question. There's a Media Educators' Association being set up, and at the moment it's hugely dominated by media teachers. Is it going to focus on defending these subjects as they are now, or on exploring how they might change? The BFI is going to be leading on a national strategy for moving image media literacy, working with the Film Council and the other bodies it funds, that is, Film Education, First Light, the Regional Screen Agencies and the Digital Screen Network, on an agenda that we hope will be more coherent and more effective in advocacy and in securing funds. I'm going to be watching this with great interest – but from the sidelines. I just hope that some of the principles that were embodied in the ILEA course – the willingness to innovate and take risks; the commitment to broadening access – will inform what happens next. I see these changes as opportunities – I do hope you will, too.

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<sup>i</sup> "Inner London Education Authority Film Study Course for Sixth Form Students", *Screen Education Notes* no 5, Winter 1972/3, page 15.

<sup>ii</sup> Len Masterman, *Teaching About Television*, London, Macmillan, 1980, page 9

<sup>iii</sup> Editorial, *Screen Education Notes*, op cit.

<sup>iv</sup> *Popular TV and Schoolchildren, the report of a group of teachers*, DES 1983, p 115.

<sup>v</sup> [www.digitalbeginnings.shef.ac.uk/final-report.htm](http://www.digitalbeginnings.shef.ac.uk/final-report.htm)

<sup>vi</sup> [http://www.skillset.org/qualifications/diploma/article\\_5119\\_1.asp](http://www.skillset.org/qualifications/diploma/article_5119_1.asp)

<sup>vii</sup> [http://www.ofcom.org.uk/advice/media\\_literacy/of\\_med\\_lit/whatis/](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/advice/media_literacy/of_med_lit/whatis/)

<sup>viii</sup> [www.euromedialiteracy.eu](http://www.euromedialiteracy.eu).