Chapter XV

Media Education, Digital Production, and New Media:
What Do Teachers Need to Know?

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Abstract

The aim of this chapter is to reflect about the teachers' training in media education. This training in England is quite insufficient and almost based on the transfer of reading competencies: this means that is does not prepare the teacher to work with digital media, normally characterized by authoring activities. Starting from the experience of a master degree developed in the London Institute of Education, the chapter tries to show how many of the problems involved in this training were discussed and solved with the teachers enrolled in the master. The hypotesis presented is based on the mix between theory and practice, the creative activity of the participants, and the centrality of the role of the learner.

Introduction

Like most countries in Europe, the UK has no formal provision for the training of media teachers as subject specialists. Media education, along with drama, is provided for in the national curriculum within English; so in principle, English teachers are trained to teach English, Media, and Drama. However, provision here largely depends on the expertise and enthusiasm of specific training providers in universities. While some centres provide substantial elements of media training within their courses, others may provide a bare minimum. In all cases, the emphasis is on media as an element of English, especially at key stage 4 (11 to 14 years old). Here, the focus is on the analysis of media texts, since media is represented within the reading section of the English national curriculum.

This leaves many gaps. There is no training for primary teachers, and the media element within English does not exist in the primary curriculum. There is no training for the specialist examination courses in media studies at GCSE and A-Level (the public exams for 16, 17 and 18 year-olds). And there is no real provision to train teachers in approaches to media production, which is, as many have pointed out, the "writing" side of the media literacy coin (Buckingham, 2003; Burn & Durran, 2007).

With the advent of digital authoring tools for the production of media texts, it is this last omission which has become most pressing in recent years in the UK. Most English teachers are happy to include an aspect of media analysis in their courses; and these are frequently analyses of advertising, newspapers, or film (Hart & Hicks, 2002). Far fewer are equipped to embark on complex forms of media production, and may feel daunted by the prospect of using digital video cameras, editing softwares, or animation softwares.

More generally, there is a need for teachers to acquire what in the UK is called "subject knowledge," as well as a sense of the pedagogies of the subject. Here, then, they need to learn about traditions of media education and media literacy. The model provided by Buckingham (2003) in *Media Education* gives a good overview of what this might mean. It includes notions of critical literacy, creative practice, the use of digital media, and the importance of popular culture. It spells out the conceptual framework around which there is a good degree of international consensus, and which includes concepts of representation, institution, and audience. While these are foundational concepts, and Buckingham's model has a valuable stabilising effect on a subject which has never become fully realised through the apparatus of the mandatory curriculum and its training regimes, it is also important to recognise difference. Legitimate variations of approach and emphasis exist in current media education practice; and to some degree, these reflect both the background of particular teachers and the curricular location of media education in particular schools.

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