

**A STUDY OF THE HISTORY OF THE CURRICULUM
FOR MEDIA STUDIES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN
WESTERN AUSTRALIA FROM 1974 TO 2024,
AND ITS DEVELOPMENT AS AN AUSTRALIAN
TERTIARY ADMISSION RANK (ATAR) SUBJECT**

by

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**This thesis is presented for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy of The University of Western Australia
Graduate School of Education
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THESIS DECLARATION

I, Rikki James, certify that:

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Date: 15 January 2024

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ABSTRACT

The global digital media landscape has changed dramatically since the turn of the century. Concern for young people in light of the impact of these changes has been evident in political and social debate and in news rhetoric across the world. Since its establishment, media education has endured as a way to equip young people to not only flourish in this changing landscape but to become critical and ethical citizens. Regardless of the urgent need for this critical literacy, the field of study has not been without conflict and struggle.

This thesis provides the first comprehensive study of secondary school media curricula in Western Australia for the period 1974 (with relevant context from the 1960s) to 2024, including in relation to its development as an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) subject. Overall, the area has been relatively unexplored by historians and sociologists. It was conducted in relation to four sub-periods: the 1960s and 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, 2000-2014 and 2015-2024. The focus was on three main research questions: ‘what were the background developments that influenced the process of constructing what came to be the dominant approach to the subject, including those associated with major issues, conflicts and compromises that arose?’, ‘what was the actual construction of the subject, in the sense of ‘construction as product’, especially in terms of the stated aims, content, pedagogy and assessment approaches?’, and ‘what were the issues, conflicts and compromises that arose following the introduction of the subject in schools?’ Further, the emphasis was on Goodson’s notion of the ‘preactive curriculum’ as represented in the officially prescribed syllabi in order to increase understanding of the influences and interests functioning at that level.

The results of the study are considered in relation to three hypotheses. The subject specific curricula for media studies including in relation to media studies in Western Australia, were influenced by international trends, nation-wide developments and State developments which were also considered. The first hypothesis states that ‘the curriculum for secondary schools in Western Australia for the period under investigation, including for media studies, was not a monolithic entity, but shifting amalgamations of sub-groups and traditions’. It was deemed to be largely upheld for secondary school media studies in the State for the overall period studied. The second hypothesis holds that ‘in the process of establishing media studies as a subject in Western Australian secondary schools there was a progression from promoting pedagogic and utilitarian traditions to an academic tradition’. This hypothesis was studied from the perspective of Beeby’s four key stages of education: the ‘Dame School Stage’, the ‘Stage of Formalism’, the ‘Stage of Transition’ and the ‘Stage of Meaning’. The hypothesis was not upheld in relation to the first two stages in the model, namely, the Dame School Stage and the Stage of Formalism. That was because by the 1960s schooling in the State had already progressed to the Stage of Transition. Overall, however, it was upheld in relation to the other stages. The third hypothesis states that ‘much of the debate that occurred about media studies as a subject in the curriculum in Western Australian secondary schools over the period studied can be interpreted in terms of wider conflict both within and between subjects over status, resources and territory’. Regarding secondary school media studies in Western Australia, the hypothesis was upheld in relation to each sub-period studied.

The study contributes to the existing corpus of international research on the history of curriculum and particularly the history of media studies as a secondary school subject in Western Australia. It also provides a framework for investigating the construction of secondary school media studies curricula in other constituencies and could act as a model for engaging in further research in curriculum history for other school subjects State wide, nationally and internationally.

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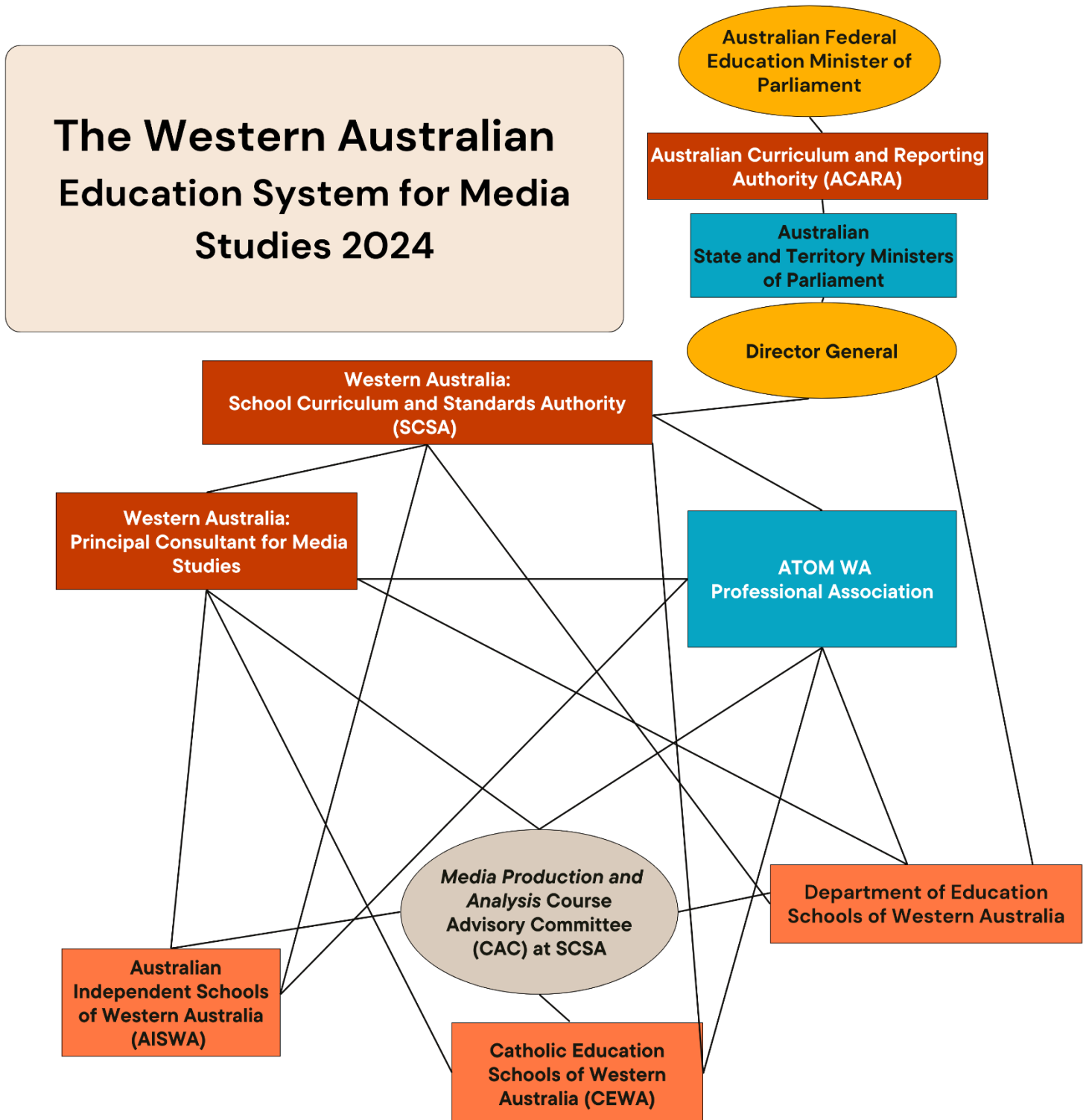
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LIST OF ACRONYMS USED IN THESIS

AS	UK Advanced Subsidiary Level (Year 12) Part 1
A2 level	UK Advanced Subsidiary Level (Year 13) Part 2
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACMA	Australian Communications and Media Authority
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ASC	Australian Schools Commission
ASIO	Australian Security Intelligence Organisation
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admission Rank
ATOMWA	Australian Teachers of Media Western Australia
BSE	Board of Secondary Education
CAF	Common Assessment Framework
CAC	Course Advisory Committee
CD	Compact Disc
CSI	Crime Scene Investigation
CSM	Common Sense Media
DSP	Disadvantaged Schools Program
DVD	Digital Versatile Disc
EDWA	Education Department of Western Australia
ERIC	Education Resources Information Centre
EST	Externally Set Task
GCSE	UK General Certificate of Secondary Education
GERM	Global Education Reform Movement
IT and ICT	Information (Communication) Technologies
MIL	Media Information Literacy
MILUNESCO	Media Information Literacy @ UNESCO
MOE	Ministry of Education, WA
MPA	Media Production and Analysis
NAMLE	National Association for Media Literacy Education
NFL	Nationwide Festival of Light
NTC	National Telemedia Council
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PLATO	People Lobbying Against the Outcomes
SCSA	School Curriculum and Standards Authority
SEA	Secondary Education Authority
SMCR	Berlo's Communication Model: <i>Sender-Message-Channel-Receiver</i>
SVOD	Subscription Video on Demand
TAEC	Tertiary Admissions Examinations Committee
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TEE	Tertiary Entrance Examination
TV	Television
UNAOC	United Nations Alliance of Civilizations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USB	Universal Serial Bus (connection point on a digital device)
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VHS	Video Home System (video recorder)
WACAE	Western Australian College of Advanced Education (later Edith Cowan University)
WACE	Western Australian Certificate of Education
WAIT	Western Australian Institute of Technology (later Curtin University)
WWII	World War Two

THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR MEDIA STUDIES



WA MEDIA STUDIES HISTORY 1974-1999

Barry McMahon pilots the first media studies course at North Lake High School.

1975

Media studies is introduced as a year 11 and 12 subject. Application for tertiary entrance status rejected.

1980

Revised upper school media studies syllabus released.

1984

Further revisions made to upper school media studies. Media studies application for tertiary entrance status again rejected. Unit Curriculum first released.

1987

Major changes released for the upper school syllabus..

1998

The unpopular Student Outcome Statements are introduced. This is the first time media studies is released as also a primary school subject. Media studies is positioned within the arts in the new Student Outcomes model of curriculum.

1974

First WA media studies newsletter *Media Message* is published to support State media teachers, published by the WA Secondary Teachers' College.

1977

New media studies newsletter *Little Aidem* (and later *Little Media*) replaces *Media Message*. Edited by Barrie McMahon.

1981

Further revision to upper school media studies released. Secondary Education Authority replaces Board of Examiners.

1986

Secondary Education Authority subject Advisory Teams abolished. Bachelor of Arts in Media Studies introduced at WACAE and Diploma of Education offered for teaching media studies degrees. Media studies piloted in the Unit Curriculum.

1988

Curriculum Framework for kindergarten to year 12 released. CAF courses written for yr 11 and 12. Student Outcome Statements released for Education Department Schools.

1999

WA MEDIA STUDIES HISTORY 2000 TO 2024

2002/3

Commencement of Curriculum Framework year 11 and 12 subjects are released. All courses of study - Stages Courses count toward university and TAFE entrance

Commencement of Common Assessment Framework (CAF) courses.

2004/5

Media Production and Analysis (MPA) year 11 and 12 Courses of Study introduced. The first time media studies is offered as a tertiary entrance subject.

2006

Practical production submission becomes an externally assessed component in MPA. Up to six members allowed in one group. Permissible submission types are photography, radio, audio visual, digital media, print.

2009

External Practical Production Submissions for MPA group size is reduced to three students maximum.

2013

The Stages courses are written as General and ATAR courses.

2014

Endorsement of the Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline to replace the Curriculum Framework for years pre-primary to year 10. This WA curriculum is based on the core principles of the Australian Curriculum.

2015

Implementation of Western Australian Curriculum for Arts subjects.

2018

Revisions to the MPA General and ATAR courses made. In particular - to modernise content in line with the changing nature of media. Practical production submissions to be individually produced only (production as a group no longer permitted). Practical production submissions can be produced as audio visual submissions only.

2023/24

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The research project undertaken and reported in this thesis, was focused on a study of the history of the curriculum for ‘media studies’ in high schools in Western Australia (WA) from 1974 to 2024, including in relation to its development as an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) subject to allow students to use their assessment results in their final year of schooling to contribute to their overall rank towards tertiary entrance. Overall, the area has been relatively unexplored by historians and sociologists. Accordingly, the present researcher designed the project to address some of the knowledge deficit in that regard. It was conducted by locating it within the interpretivist paradigm. Consistent with that paradigm, an adapted grounded theory approach to data gathering and analysis was used. The rest of this chapter is in five parts. First, an overview of the broad context is considered. Secondly, justifications for undertaking the study are detailed. Thirdly, an overview of the context and of related academic literature is presented. Fourthly, the background to studies on the history of curriculum is explored briefly. Finally, the chapter closes with an overview of the methodology and the mode of historical analysis used.

Overview of the Broad Context

Historically, the most distinctive purpose detailed for media studies in schools internationally has been the protection of youth from ‘undesirable’ influences. In particular, protection has been seen to relate to the introduction and influence of media forms in society and, in particular, in relation to their effect on young people. Specifically in the case of WA, that protectionism has been evident in the objectives for media studies in prescribed school curricula. At the same time, developments were also undertaken in response to perceived needs for curriculum change in the area of the ‘whole’ curriculum.

Media studies as a discrete subject specialisation emerged in high schools in WA in 1974, following an expansion in curriculum offerings at the time. Since then, as a secondary or high school subject, it has been characterised by struggle. Further, following it being given tertiary entrance subject status in 2007 in the curriculum for students in their final year of schooling, there was an attempt made to strike a balance between having a focus on media production (including film, television and print media production) and on critical analyses of media. To this day, the repercussions of decisions directed at trying to achieve that balance have had an ongoing effect on teachers of media education students. Hence, studies like that presented in this thesis are needed to clarify how the current situation has been arrived at and to indicate possible policy implications for future developments.

The origin of media studies as a discrete subject in WA was an initiative taken by a teacher of secondary English, Barrie McMahon, who piloted it at North Lake Senior High school in Perth in 1974.¹ It was also developed as part of the WA English curriculum (as distinct from the curriculum for English Literature) that had, as it still does in 2024, a media text analysis component.² Later developments led to the field being categorised as an arts' subject. That shift was significant because while an association with English remains through the media content in the English syllabus, the specialist media subject has been shaped by its alignment with an arts' suite of subjects that were detailed following the development of the State's new Curriculum Framework in 1998 under WA Minister for Education Colin Barnett (1993-2001). Currently, a challenge for teachers of media studies as a subject in WA secondary schools is how to deliver the various prescribed courses in the field for each school year level in order to encourage students to critically engage with the nature of the international,

¹ R. Quin. *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Edith Cowan University, 2001).

² School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA). *Summary of Year 11 and 12 Courses*. (Perth, Western Australia: SCSA, 2019), <https://senior-secondary.scsa.wa.edu.au/further-resources/background-information>.

national, and local media in which they are immersed. On that, it is important to keep in mind that historically, national and State education policies and reforms have significantly shaped developments, as have teachers', parents', and students' expectations of how the subject should be constructed. In particular, these and other influences have been instrumental in honing subject content and in informing the way in which the subject was and currently is taught in the classroom.

In 2001, Robyn Quin made a significant contribution to research on teachers of media studies in Western Australia.³ Since then, very little research has been published in the field, notwithstanding the advent of significant related curriculum change.⁴ The latter has been guided by works that include 'Media Production and Analysis' (MPA) which detail what is now an ATAR subject for examination to attain a tertiary entrance score and ranking.⁵

Justifications for Understanding the Study

Overall, the exposition in this thesis focusses on the historical background to the teaching of media studies internationally, nationally and locally in WA schools, as well as on such current developments in the WA media studies courses as the shift that took place that has led to it being recognised as an ATAR offering. Overall, the work makes a number of contributions to knowledge in the field. First, it provides an overview of influences on the development of the media studies curriculum internationally and nationally, thus providing a broad understanding of the way the subject has developed to this day. Secondly, it provides an overview of influences on the development of the media studies curriculum in WA since its conception in 1974. Thirdly, it provides an analysis of the current MPA ATAR course structure, making

³ Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?*

⁴ Curriculum Council, *Our Youth, Our Future: Post-Education Review- Summary of the Directions Endorsed by the Western Australian Government*. (Perth, Western Australia: Curriculum Council, 2002).

⁵ School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA), *Media Production and Analysis ATAR-Summary of Syllabus Changes*. (Perth, Western Australia: SCSA, 2023).

comparisons to similar courses nationally and internationally in order to provide a valuable framework for those wishing to engage in further critique and seeking to recommend developments for the future. Fourthly, it provides insights to inform considerations for policy in relation to the MPA ATAR course, the teaching of MPA ATAR, and the preparation of WA teachers of media. Finally, it is of value in that it can help by way of providing insights for those engaged in the design of further studies for examining the teaching of MPA ATAR across WA and in other school sectors.

At the outset, a systematic review of past and current literature was conducted in order to ensure that the research was original. That involved consulting handbooks containing accounts of media literacy and media education that are written in English. Further searches were then conducted using the Google Scholar and Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC) databases. After collating the literature thus identified, it was perused in the form of referenced articles, journals, literature reviews books and theses. Primary source historical documents were then located and considered for relevance.

Aim of the Study

The aim of the study reported here, as indicated already, was to develop an understanding of the historical background to the teaching of media studies in WA from 1974 to the present. To that end, the researcher set out to describe and analyse developments that had an impact on the subject for that context. In particular, the focus in relation to each of a number of sub-periods identified was on the aims and intentions of the key stakeholders involved in developing it at various stages, the strategies they proposed to realise those aims and intentions, the significance they attached to these aims and intentions, and the outcomes sought as a result of pursuing these aims and intentions. The reasons expressed at the time by key stakeholders in relation to why they said what they said on each of the four areas were also explored.

Overview of the Context

In Australia there is a national curriculum titled the ‘Australian Curriculum’.⁶ It is designed for students from those in the pre-primary school years to those in Year 10. It includes ‘the arts’ learning area, which consists of discrete subjects that include ‘visual art’, ‘music’, ‘drama’, ‘dance’ and ‘media arts’. Version six of that learning area was introduced in July 2015. It was mandated by the Federal government to be implemented by Australian schools, but the choice of which arts’ subjects that are to be taught from the suite of those outlined is decided upon by the authorities in individual schools within each State and territory, which remains the case in 2024.

The Australian Curriculum for primary schools details the breadth of the prescribed subjects.⁷ The Australian Curriculum since it was first introduced, however, mandates that all States implement the same curriculum or produce one aligned with its core principles. This means that there is consistency across the nation in relation to all related subjects taught.⁸ Thus, in the State of WA, a version that aligns with the Australian Curriculum has been ‘adapted and adopted’ for WA students.⁹

Within the WA Arts curriculum, teachers are required to teach at least two ‘types’ of arts subjects, one of which has to be a ‘performing’ subject and the other which has to be a ‘visual’ subject.¹⁰ Those categorised as performing subjects are ‘drama’, ‘dance’, and ‘music’, while the visual subjects are ‘visual art’ and ‘media arts’. ‘Media arts’ is a financially expensive

⁶ Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), *Australian Curriculum: Australian Curriculum Version 9.0, Endorsed*. (Sydney, Australia: ACARA, 2023), <https://acara.edu.au/curriculum>.

⁷ Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum*. (Sydney, Australia: ACARA, 2013), https://acaraweb.blob.core.windows.net/resources/The_Shape_of_the_Australian_Curriculum_v4.pdf.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA), *What Will My Child Learn?* (Perth, Western Australia: SCSA, <https://scsa.wa.edu.au/parents/what-will-my-child-learn>).

¹⁰ Hudson, M. *Beginning to work with the new P-10 Arts Syllabuses*, K to 10 Circular Edition 2, 2016 School Curriculum and Standards Authority (Perth, Western Australia: SCSA, <https://www.scsa.wa.edu.au/publications/circulars/kto10-circulars/archive/2016/k-to-10-circular-edition-2-2016>).

subject to establish and maintain as typically it requires that students have access to cameras and video editing equipment. Thus, when given a choice between choosing visual art or media arts, the great majority of WA schools' authorities favour visual arts as they usually have the necessary physical infrastructure to make provision for it. This situation prevails because visual art and music were both offered as separate school subjects prior to the establishment of the national curriculum.

For the secondary school sector, Australian Curriculum media arts, written for those in Years 7-10, is based on the assumption that it will be taught by specialist secondary school teachers. This differs from what the situation was historically in the 1970s, when there was a mixture of different types of media studies offered in different States. For students in Year 11 and 12 (upper secondary school in Australian States and Territories), there is a variety of non-tertiary and tertiary entrance media studies' offerings. The research reported in this thesis in relation to that cohort of students was focussed on the Year 12 tertiary entrance option in WA. The equivalent tertiary entrance subject options for media studies in other states are as follows: Victoria – *Media*;¹¹ South Australia and Northern Territory - *Media Studies Stage 2*;¹² Queensland - *Film Television and New Media*;¹³ and Tasmania - *Media Production 3*.¹⁴ Further, New South Wales has a school-assessed media course, with the results contributing, if desired by a student, to his or her overall high school certificate (HSC) results. There is not, however, a tertiary entrance media course in that State that can be used to contribute to a student's overall ATAR score.

¹¹ Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), *Media*. (Victoria, Australia: VCAA, 2023), <https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Media/Pages/Index.aspx>.

¹² South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE), *Media Studies*. (South Australia: SACE, 2023), <https://www.sace.sa.edu.au/web/media-studies/overview>.

¹³ Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA), *Film, Television and New Media General Senior Syllabus 2019: Overview*. (Queensland, Australia: QCAA, 2016), <https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/senior-subjects/the-arts/film-television-new-media>

¹⁴ Children and Young People Department for Education, *Year 11 and 12 Course Guide*. (Tasmania, Australia: Tasmanian Department of Education, Children and Young People, 2023), [https://www.decyp.tas.gov.au/year-11-12-course-guide/find-a-course/?search=media production 3](https://www.decyp.tas.gov.au/year-11-12-course-guide/find-a-course/?search=media%20production%203).

Overview of Related Academic Literature

Media literacy is considered by some to consist of a constellation of life skills necessary for full participation in our media-saturated, information-rich society.¹⁵ Throughout this thesis media refers to all electronic and digital means, along with print and artistic visuals, used to transmit messages to an audience. More specifically, media literacy can be defined as an ability to gain access to, analyse, evaluate, create, and act using forms of communication.¹⁶ It is also a term often used to describe a learning outcome of media education and media studies offered in schools, universities, and community-based programs. In particular, it usually involves encoding and decoding messages transmitted through the media and acquiring the ability to synthesise, analyse and produce mediated messages. On this, the subject has traditionally been conceived as being based on a process or set of skills based on critical thinking.

The latter view has a long history associated with a dialectic between protection, as in protecting students from the effects of the media around them, and participation, as in engaging students in media production.¹⁷ In general too, the introduction of any new media form historically has been met by some with excitement. Concurrently, particular conservative groups expressed fear of potential changes that new media might create in relation to values and morality. An example of this is what took place in the United States (US) in the early 1930s. There, conservative and religious groups were concerned about the effect of film content

¹⁵ R. Hobbs, *Digital and Media Literacy: A Plan of Action; A White Paper on the Digital and Media Literacy Recommendations of the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy*. (Washington, US: The Aspen Institute, 2010).

¹⁶ National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), *Core Principles of Media Literacy Education in the United States*. (New York, US: NAMLE, 2019).

¹⁷ M. Bulger and P. Davison, The promises, challenges and futures of media literacy, *Journal of Media Literacy Education*. vol. 10, no. 1 (2018): pp. 1-21.

on children. As a result, they became instrumental in establishing the Payne Fund research project that led to an investigation of the effects of film viewing on children.¹⁸

The published results of the Payne Fund research project did not demonstrate the existence of a negative correlation between film viewing and psychological and social effects on children. They did, however, indicate that film is one of a number of potential major influences, along with peers and family, in a child's life. That was not the message welcomed by religious and conservative groups, who were seeking a result confirming that film consumption had a significant negative influence on children. Controversially, through their persuasive political influence, those groups manipulated a popular response to the results that misinterpreted the research as confirming their desires. Thus, the way was paved for the development of one of the purposes of media education, namely, as serving to protect young people from media influence.

Ever since the Payne fund research results were published, the question of young people's engagement with media has persisted as a social concern. Indeed, moral panic about young people's ability to act in and upon the world consciously, morally, ethically, safely, and responsibly has sometimes also been manifested.¹⁹ Relatedly, many media education initiatives around the world have exhibited protectionist responses. As a form of inoculation, those were then translated into pedagogies. Further, the trend persisted until the early 1960s,²⁰ and even today it still has resonance in various media studies programs.

¹⁸ A. R. Jr. Jarvis, *The Payne Fund Reports: A discussion of their content, public reaction, and affect on the motion picture industry 1930-1940*, *Journal of Popular Culture*. vol. 25, no. 1 (1991), pp. 127-140; L. Masterman, *Teaching the Media*. (London, UK: Routledge, 1985).

¹⁹ M. Dezuanni, *Agentive realism and media literacy*, *Journal of Media Literacy*. vol. 64, no. 1&2, (2017): pp. 16-19.

²⁰ D. Anderson and C. Arcus, *From the guest editors*, *Journal of Media Literacy*. vol. 64, no. 1&2, (2017). p. 3.

Media Studies Internationally

Internationally, media education has developed and expanded across countries in different ways. In some places, media literacies are taught as part of an interdisciplinary approach in schools, with the responsibility being located within all or some subjects (similar to the expectation that literacy teaching in English should be the collective responsibility of all teachers in some English-speaking nations). Further to this, teachers in certain countries teach it as a discrete subject, while some in others use both approaches.

One of the major criticisms of current media literacy theory regardless of approach, however, is that it is predominantly written in English and from a Western hegemonic perspective, thus representing dominant Western ideologies and purposes. That presents a challenge for people in non-Western nations wishing to develop media curricula suited to their unique cultures instead of importing from a dominant one. The associated argument is that a Western perspective can isolate and disempower people in both developing and non-English speaking nations in relation to arriving at their own approaches to media education.¹

Another issue is that of the influence on individuals of the rapidly changing landscape of the internet and Web 2.0 technologies (the second generation of internet technologies supporting consumer interaction), and also of their prolific interaction with such traditional media as television, live streaming services, podcasts, newspapers online, and film fan bases based on social networking platforms. The existence of a distinction between what is considered traditional media and new media has also been challenged. By contrast, historically, many in various education systems saw traditional media in terms of media studies while new media was seen as involving computing and information technology subjects at school. At the

¹ C. Sparks, Global media studies: its development and dilemmas, *Media Culture & Society*, vol. 35, no. 1 (2013): pp. 121-131.

same time, there have always been overlaps. Moreover, as technologies converge, divisions between the subjects have become blurred.

Currently there is also significant discussion taking place around the notion of combining media studies and computer studies into one field of knowledge. Relatedly, many countries, including the US,² are referring to digital media as a subject encompassing all media. In other jurisdictions, including the United Kingdom (UK), a redefinition of the term media studies has been suggested.³ Moreover, following controversy in the US in 2016 regarding potential Russian influence on the national presidential campaign through social media, and also regarding increased terror attacks in the Western world like the Charlie Hebdo staff attacks in France, there has been an increase in fear concerning the political influence of various forms of media, including the press, broadcasting and social media, on society. All of this has heightened pressure on governments to respond, usually through a public demand for the provision of media literacy programs in schools and in the community, in order to empower citizens to be critical of messages presented through news broadcast and social media. There has also been increased international collaboration between nations across the globe over the last number of years in identifying the need for media literacy. On this, media education experts at The Media and Information Literacy Clearinghouse, where UNAOC (United Nations Alliance of Civilizations) and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) interests are combined, have argued:

The constant exposure of populations to media presents an educational challenge, which has increased in the electronic and digital age. Evaluating information sources requires skills and critical thinking and is an educational responsibility- the importance of which is often underestimated. Separating fact from opinion, evaluating text and image for bias, and constructing and deconstructing a text based on principles of logic are teachable skills. Media literacy education instruction is not widely recognized for its importance as an aspect of civic and peace education and therefore few instructional

² (NAMLE), *Core Principles of Media Literacy Education in the United States*.

³ D. Buckingham, Defining digital literacy- what do young people need to know about digital media? *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy*, vol. 4 , (2015). pp. 21-34.

programs have been developed as part of basic modern education. It is a growing area of study, but its value is often underestimated.⁴

They recommend also that media literacy programs be made available in secondary schools to encourage students to become discerning and critical media consumers as a result of developing a media literacy that has the power to challenge misperceptions, prejudices and hate speech.

In a summary of related research results, researchers at the Media Literacy Clearinghouse mentioned above, outlined major challenges for media literacy and implementation in their nations.⁵ Experts from Armenia, China, Greece, Russia, and Serbia reported resistance by administrative bodies. Experts from Armenia, Greece and Hungary reported an overloaded curriculum in the classroom. Experts from Belgium, Canada, Greece, Hungary, Mexico, Russia, Spain, and the US reported a need for the initial and continuing training of teachers. Experts from Israel, Russia and Slovakia reported the need for the development of critical thinking in the media. Furthermore, experts consulted in Hungary, Serbia, Spain, Russia, Thailand and US reported a need for the development of high-level research and curriculum proposals.⁶

Academics have also noted that modern media education has been shaped by political, economic, and social factors. To this, they have added that the phenomenon is currently in a transitional phase as countries wrestle with a proliferation of new media and its impact on society. Fear again drives much of the associated development, especially in societies that have suffered from terrorism attacks. In response, priorities of those advocating for the introduction of media studies in schools have stressed agency, thus reinforcing the views promoted by UNESCO. An overall emphasis of theirs is on students needing not only to be able to critique

⁴ Media and Information Literacy United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (MILUNESCO), *About: Media and Information Literacy Clearinghouse* (Accessed 1 January 2024), <https://milunesco.unaoc.org/welcome/>.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ A. Fedorov, A. Levitskaya, and E. Camarero, Curricula for media literacy education according to international experts, *European Journal of Contemporary Education* vol. 17, no. 3 (2016): pp. 324-334.

and produce media, but also to be agents of change as global citizens. On this, the use of new media, it is held, can make the achievement of all such objectives possible.⁷

Even though media literacy is increasingly being recognised as a skill that all citizens should possess to engage effectively in a media saturated society, that is not always recognised in many nations as part of a standard school curriculum.⁸ Instead, the ‘subject’ is sometimes taught as a particular form of ‘literacy across the curriculum.’ More commonly, however, it is taught as a discrete subject of knowledge, usually titled ‘media studies’ or ‘media education’.

The Research Plan

The examination of the academic literature related to media studies as presented above indicates that there is a lack of studies aimed at understanding media studies in Australian schools. The situation also means that there is a limited knowledge base that can be drawn upon to develop models to guide curriculum and pedagogy for media studies in the country. On this too, while a number of research projects conducted were focussed on media studies more broadly in Australia, no systematic and comprehensive research project on media studies in WA has been undertaken since 2001.⁹

The study reported in this thesis was conducted as one contribution to attempt to rectify the above-mentioned deficits. The principal aim, it will be recalled, was to generate an understanding of the historical background to the teaching of media studies as a subject area in schools in WA. The particular focus of the analysis was on how media studies as a subject for high schools in WA was constructed over the period from 1974 when it was first introduced, to the present day (2024).

⁷ United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *Medium-Term Strategy, 2014-2021* (Paris, France: UNESCO, 2013), Accessed 10 November, 2022. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000227860>.

⁸ National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), *Media Literacy Defined* (New York, US: NAMLE, Accessed 20 December 2023), <https://namle.net/publications/media-literacy-definitions/>.

⁹ Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?*

The overall exposition presented is detailed in relation to four phases. These are the 1960s and 1970s, entitled *The Early Years*; The 1980s and 1990s, entitled *A Shift in Pedagogy*; 2000s to 2014, entitled *An Unceremonious Rebirth*; and 2015 to 2024, entitled *The Current Day Syllabus*.

Regarding each of these phases, the study provides a detailed analysis of the nuances, variations and in certain instances deviations from general assumptions underpinning what was prescribed. Relatedly, the political education policies and reforms that shaped developments, as well as the political climate that shaped content structure and the curriculum delivered in the classroom, are discussed. Moreover, while media studies is a subject that is taught from the pre-primary school stage to Year 12 level in WA in 2024, the specific focus in this thesis is on developments in media studies for secondary school students and for those especially in Year 12 within the State.

To engage in the level of analysis detailed for those mentioned above, the conduct of the study was guided by three main research questions posed in relation to each: What were the background developments that influenced the process of constructing what came to be the dominant approach to the subject, including those associated with major issues, conflicts and compromises that arose? What was the actual construction of the subject, in the sense of ‘construction as product’, especially in terms of the stated aims, content, pedagogy and assessment approaches? What were the issues, conflicts and compromises that arose following the introduction of the subject in schools?

Background to Studies on the History of Curriculum

The following section of this chapter is based on similar sections in other theses written as part of a project upon which this thesis is also based. That is particularly so in relation to the theses

of Mortimer and Russell.¹⁰ For many decades the history of education focused broadly on three main themes: the history of education thought and thinkers in education, the history of educational systems,¹¹ and the history of education policy.¹² That led to the development of a number of subdisciplines, including the history of education aims and policy, of pedagogy, of education administration, of teacher education and of education research. Within these sub-disciplines some attention was directed to the history of the process of education in schools and higher education institutions, including universities. Amongst the pioneering works produced specifically on the history of the school curriculum are those that were undertaken by Tanner and Tanner¹³ on the situation in the US, by Cunningham¹⁴ on England and Wales, by Musgrave¹⁵ on Australia, and by McCulloch¹⁶ on New Zealand. The work of Goodson¹⁷ on the history of school subjects brought a new sophistication to the field.

Goodson was motivated by a view that along with there being value in seeking to provide sociological explanations of the school curriculum, an emphasis on the social history of school subjects can generate significant insights and questions of importance for the future of the secondary school.¹⁸ He expressed a belief that differential status and available resources in relation to various school subjects was and is derived from their origins. Given then its

¹⁰ W. J. Mortimer, *The Construction of the Geography Curriculum as a Subject for the Senior Years of State Secondary Schooling in Western Australia: a Historical Analysis of Developments from 1917 to 1997* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Western Australia, 2020); P. H. Russell, *A History of How Religious Education was Constructed as a Curriculum Subject for Anglican Schools in Western Australia 1826 to 2015*. (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Western Australia, 2022).

¹¹ H. Silver, Aspects of neglect: the strange case of Victorian popular education, *Oxford Review of Education*, vol. 3, no. 1, (1977): pp. 57-69

¹² R. Lowe, (ed.), *Studies in Learning and Teaching*, 4 vols, vol. 3 (London, UK: Routledge and Falmer, 2002)

¹³ L. N. Tanner, Curriculum history as usable knowledge, *Curriculum Inquiry*, vol. 12, no. 4 (1982), pp. 405-411

¹⁴ P. Cunningham, *Curriculum Changes in the Primary School Since 1945* (London: Falmer Press, 1988).

¹⁵ P. W. Musgrave, *Socialising Contexts : The Subject in Society* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988).

¹⁶ G. McCulloch, Curriculum history in England and New Zealand, in R. Lowe (ed.), *History of Education: Major Themes* (London, UK: Routledge Falmer, 1987), pp. 297-330.

¹⁷ I. F. Goodson, *The Making of the Curriculum: Collected Essays* (United States: Taylor and Francis Ltd. 1995)

¹⁸ I. F. Goodson, *School Subjects and Curriculum Changes* (East Sussex, UK: Croom Helm Ltd. 1987).

significance, the consequence of not engaging in the study of the history of curriculum, he held, can be “historical amnesia”.¹⁹ This condition, he argued, could lead to curriculum reinvention rather than development.

Goodson went on to reject the view of the written curriculum as a “neutral given”, proposing instead that a school subject is “a social artefact, conceived of and made for deliberate human purposes.”²⁰ Hargreaves supported this notion with his argument that school subjects are “more than groupings of intellectual thought. They are social systems too. They compete for power, prestige, recognition, and reward.”²¹ Popkewitz revisited this argument, calling for a serious exploration of “historically formed rules and standards that order, classify, and divide what is ‘seen’ and acted on in schooling.”²²

Various other academics also emphasised the importance of engaging in the study of curriculum history. Franklin “explored what contemporary curriculum historians, particularly in the US, had to say about the curriculum as a social construct and as a regulative mechanism.”²³ In a similar vein, Glatthorn, Floyd and Whitehead, in a book chapter devoted to curriculum history, underlined the importance of the study of curriculum history for educational leaders.²⁴ Equally, Wright stated that the study of curriculum history has to be the focus “for the entire field of curriculum and for both the history and present state of play of how we conceptualize and theorize curriculum.”²⁵ Similarly, McAllister, Greenhill, Madsen,

¹⁹ I. F. Goodson and C. J. Marsh, *Studying School Subjects: A Guide*. (London, UK, Taylor and Francis Ltd, 2005).

²⁰ Goodson, *The Making of the Curriculum: Collected Essays*. p. 260.

²¹ A. Hargreaves. *Curriculum and Assessment Reform* (Milton Keynes, UK, Open University Press, 1989). p. 56.

²² T. S. Popkewitz, Curriculum study, curriculum history, and curriculum theory: the reason of reason, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, vol. 41, no. 3 (2009). pp. 301-319.

²³ B. M. Franklin, Review essay: the state of curriculum history, *History of Education*, vol. 28, no. 4 (1999). p. 459.

²⁴ A. A. Glatthorn, F. Boschee, and B. M. Whitehead, *Curriculum Leadership: Strategies for Development and Implementation*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, US: Sage, 2008).

²⁵ H. K. Wright, Does Hlebowitsh improve on curriculum history? Reading a rereading for its political purpose and implications, *Curriculum Inquiry*, vol. 35, no. 1 (2005). pp. 103-117.

and Godden argued that a study of curriculum history is important for those educating future nurses.²⁶ Others adopted Goodson's position in order to study the history of a range of school subjects. These include Tan,²⁷ Braine,²⁸ Burton,²⁹ Green and Cormack,³⁰ and Popkewitz.³¹ The study reported in this thesis, for which Goodson's position was also adopted, is offered as a further contribution to the field. It contributes specifically to the history of media studies as a school subject. As with the history of the school curriculum in general, and the history of individual school subjects in particular, this is a much-neglected area of research.

To recap then, the aim of the study reported in later chapters was to provide an historical analysis of how media studies as a subject in WA secondary schools was constructed over the period from the 1960s to the present, with particular reference to its inclusion as a subject that can be used by students for consideration for tertiary entrance. Four phases in the development of the subject were identified. These are as follows: 1960s and 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, 2000s to 2014, and 2015 to 2024.

Methodology

The central aim of the study reported in this thesis, it will be recalled, was to produce an historical analysis of how media studies as a subject for WA secondary schools was constructed from the 1974 to 2024, including the context of the 1960s leading up to its establishment in 1974, to its development into an Australian Tertiary Entrance Rank (ATAR) subject. For each of the four sub-periods examined, a detailed analysis was conducted. That analysis focused on

²⁶ M. McAllister et al., Generating ideas for the teaching of nursing's history in Australia, *Collegian*, vol. 17, no. 1 (2009). pp. 13-22.

²⁷ K. J. Tan, *History of the History Curriculum under Colonialism and Decolonisation: a Comparison of Hong Kong and Macau* (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Hong Kong, 1993).

²⁸ G. Braine, *Teaching English to the world: History, Curriculum, and Practice* (New York, US: Routledge, 2011).

²⁹ D. M. Burton, *The History of Mathematics: An Introduction* (New York, US: McGraw-Hill, 2011).

³⁰ B. Green and P. Cormack, Curriculum history, 'English' and the new education; or, installing the empire of English?, *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, vol. 16, no. 3 (2008). pp. 253-267.

³¹ T. S. Popkewitz, Curriculum history, schooling and the history of the present, *History of Education*, vol. 40, no. 1 (2011). pp. 1-19.

the nuances, variations in, and where identified, deviations from the general assumptions underpinning developments that took place in relation to each of them. The theoretical framework that underpins the study reported is based on the work of Goodson.³² As stated already, this framework rejects the view of the written curriculum “as a neutral given embedded in an otherwise meaningful complex situation.”³³ Rather, what is proposed is a view of the curriculum “as a social artefact, conceived of and made for deliberate human purposes.”³⁴ In adopting Goodson’s position, it was recognised that cognisance would need to be taken of his argument that curriculum history should be studied at both the preactive and interactive curriculum levels. To study curriculum history at the preactive level is to focus on the plans or syllabi that outline what is intended in a course or program. It involves studying not only the structures and patterns within such documents, but also identifying the various individuals and interest groups who were involved in their production, and the nature and extent of their influence. On the other hand, to study curriculum history at the interactive level is to focus on how the preactive curriculum was mediated in the classrooms, how the subjects or disciplines were taught, what strategies and activities were used, what experiences students had, and what learning processes took place. Goodson made a case for focusing initially on the preactive level in one’s study of the history of an individual subject in order to increase our understanding of the influences and interests at work at this level. He also contended that this has the potential to:

³² R. Lowe, *History of Education: Major Themes*. (London, UK: Routledge, 2008); I. F. Goodson, *Learning, Curriculum And Life History : Selected Works by Ivor F. Goodson*, (Hoboken, US: Taylor and Francis Ltd. 2005); I. F. Goodson, Times of educational change: towards an understanding of patterns of historical and cultural refraction, *Journal of Education Policy*, vol. 25, no. 6 (2010) pp. 767-775; Goodson, *The Making of the Curriculum: Collected Essays*.

³³ *Ibid.* p. 260.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 270.

..further our knowledge of the values and purposes represented... and how preactive definition, notwithstanding individual and local variations, may set parameters for interactive realisation and negotiation in the classroom and the school.³⁵

To argue, then, that the focus of the study detailed in this thesis is on the preactive curriculum is synonymous with saying that it deals with the construction of media studies as a subject. A study of the interactive curriculum would have demanded a focus on the interactions which took place in classrooms in order to examine how media studies as a subject in WA secondary schools was mediated. While the latter was recognised as also being important work that needs to be undertaken, it was deemed that to pursue it concurrently would have meant engaging in a separate project.

The overall guiding questions for engaging in the study, it will be recalled, were as follows:

- a. What were the background developments which influenced the process of constructing what came to be the dominant approach to the subject, including those associated with major issues, conflicts and compromises that arose?
- b. What was the actual construction of the subject, in the sense of ‘construction as product’, especially in terms of the stated aims, content, pedagogy and assessment approaches?
- c. What were the issues, conflicts and compromises that arose following the introduction of the subject in schools?

As guiding questions, these were not specific questions posed by the present researcher to be answered by her in a lock-step fashion. Rather, they were questions that suggested themselves from the particular social science position underpinning the study as being the most productive guides to generate data pertinent to addressing the overall aim. Moreover, each was brought to bear in relation to each of the four periods identified. In doing so, stability and change in perspectives over time, both within and across topics, were also examined.

In the initial stages of research, the study was guided also by the following hypotheses adapted from Goodson’s work:

³⁵ I. F. Goodson and P. Medway, *Bringing English to Order: the History and Politics of a School Subject*. (London, UK: Falmer Press, 1990). p. 263.

- The curriculum for secondary schools in Western Australia for the period under investigation, including for media studies, was not a monolithic entity, but shifting amalgamations of sub-groups and traditions;
- In the process of establishing media studies as a subject in Western Australian secondary schools there was a progression from promoting pedagogic and utilitarian traditions to an academic tradition;
- Much of the debate that occurred about media studies as a subject in the curriculum in Western Australian secondary schools over the period studied can be interpreted in terms of wider conflict both within and between subjects over status, resources and territory.³⁶

Testing these hypotheses at every opportunity that arose was deemed to be an important practice in which to engage from the outset.

In regard to these guiding questions and theoretical positions, the researcher set out to describe and analyse the developments that had an impact on media studies in each era of focus. Using open coding procedures consistent with the adapted grounded theory approach to data gathering and analysis, the researcher methodically scoured every relevant artefact related to media studies in WA. During this process, the guiding questions were constantly considered of the material, comparing and grouping data to distil themes and concepts before generating larger themes. Themes such as ‘moral panics and fear’, ‘protectionism’, ‘agency and ethical consumerism’, ‘Web 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0’ and ‘Media studies’ identity crisis’ were uncovered amongst others.

Whilst the application of the guiding questions applied to the documents being analysed assisted the researcher to understand what the data revealed about media studies in WA during different time periods, she was equally open to new findings throughout the process. The distilled themes were methodically compared and organised through the coding process as the research began to take shape and as understanding was developed. The coding process and deep analysis positioned the researcher to reflect on what it might have felt like to be in the shoes of media teachers and key stakeholders at the time.

³⁶ Goodson, *School Subjects and Curriculum Changes*.

Some of the themes and findings in the researcher's second level analysis revealed a shift in the purpose of media studies to that of agency, in the later years. This new purpose emerged as global digital media convergence grew at an unprecedented pace in the 2010s and 2020s, and as the capacity of media technologies to provide a voice for the everyday consumer (the prosumer) increased. A parallel became apparent between the expectation of media students to become ethical digital citizens as well as agents of social justice, at the same time as the latest moral panic surrounding digital technologies emerged, bringing new societal fears related to artificial intelligence, data mining and algorithmic culture.

Historical Analysis

The study is based largely on an analysis of primary and secondary source documents, particularly those in the archives of the State curriculum authority in WA, entitled the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA). An array of public reports from committees, such as the SCSA Course Advisory Committee (CAC) was also drawn upon. These provided insights on the pressures and demands on media studies as a subject in WA schools. Scholarly books and articles pertaining to media education in WA, also contributed to an understanding of the historical background relevant to the study. Additional insights on various aspects of the study were provided on consulting with a number of key stakeholders and curriculum writers for the subject's development.

While traditional historical approaches to the analysis of sources were used, various theoretical positions were also drawn upon. The first of these was based on Goodson's³⁷ work detailed already. Initially, there was an 'internal' analysis of various relevant curriculum documents. That was then followed by an 'external' analysis to ensure that consideration was given to the broader environmental, social, economic, and political contexts within which they were situated. In other words, patterns uncovered during the internal analysis were considered

³⁷ Goodson, *The Making of the Curriculum: Collected Essays*.

in their relationship to such aspects of the wider context as the nature of media studies and WA schooling, the structure of society, technological changes, the economy, and political and philosophical viewpoints.

The second theoretical position that informed the analysis was Beeby's stages of development in education systems.³⁸ This is as relevant today as when it was first put forward back in the 1960s. It focuses on the role of the teacher in facilitating progress through four key stages: the 'Dame School Stage', the 'Stage of Formalism', the 'Stage of Transition' and the 'Stage of Meaning'. The 'Dame School Stage' is characterised by ill-educated and untrained teachers who are only able to teach narrow subject content through rigid techniques of memorisation using simple prescribed texts. At the 'Stage of Formalism' teachers have received a basic training but are still ill-educated. The 'Stage of Transition' is characterised by teachers who have received a basic training, but who have a better general education than teachers at the 'Stage of Formalism'. Finally, at the 'Stage of Meaning' teachers are well educated and well trained. A variety of content and methods, including problem solving, are used by them within a wide curriculum to cater creatively for individual differences amongst learners.

Beeby's theory was, then, seen by the present author as having direct relevance for considering teaching practice. It was also seen as useful for considering how curriculum subjects, and especially media studies have developed. In particular, it provided a useful categorising system for considering the general position and orientation of media studies as a subject in WA secondary schools at particular points in time.

The remainder of the study is presented in three sections. Section One detailed in Chapter Two, explores the history of media education, Section Two, detailed in Chapter Three

³⁸ C. Beeby, *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries*. (Cambridge, US: Harvard University Press, 1966).

explores international media education in Australia and internationally. In the next four chapters, media studies curriculum for Years 7 to 12 during the 1960s and 1970s, the 1980s and 1990s, 2000 to 2014, and 2015 to 2024, are detailed and analysed.

Notes on Style

This thesis uses footnotes and Chicago referencing style, consistent with a history thesis. In this case, 'ibid' is used to refer to the previous reference. Numbers are written in short form, for example year twelve is written as 'Year 12'.

CHAPTER 2

THE BACKGROUND

Introduction

As stated in the previous chapter, media literacy is considered to consist of a constellation of life skills necessary for full participation in our media saturated and information-rich society.¹ The assumption underpinning this view is that media ranges from electronic and digital means and print to artistic visuals used to transmit messages to an audience. More specifically, though, the term can be defined too in relation to having an ability to gain access to, analyse, evaluate, create, and act using various forms of communication.² The term also is often used to describe a learning outcome of media education and media studies offered in schools, universities, and community-based programs. In particular, it involves encoding and decoding messages transmitted through the media, and acquiring the ability to synthesise, analyse and produce mediated messages. In this regard, media literacy has traditionally been conceived of as a process or set of skills based on critical thinking.³ Historically, over the last two centuries, there have been numerous theories about the role and influence of media on society, and these are all based on different values. The research has bracketed the historical Western context to position dominant philosophies pertaining to Ancient Greece with philosophers such as Plato, who attempted to distinguish the difference between media that informed from media that persuaded,⁴ through to the influence of globalisation in the 21st century on new media forms. Taking this as background, the rest of this chapter opens with a brief exploration of the history

¹ Hobbs, *Digital and Media Literacy: A Plan of Action; A White Paper on the Digital and Media Literacy Recommendations of the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy*.

² (NAMLE), *Core Principles of Media Literacy Education in the United States*.

³ Bulger and Davison, *The promises, challenges and futures of media literacy*.

⁴ J. Auerbach and R. Castronovo, Introduction: thirteen propositions about propaganda, in J. Auerbach and R. Castronovo (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Propaganda Studies* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013).

of the introduction of new media forms inciting moral panic. Secondly, societal protectionist responses to a perceived moral decline are considered. Thirdly, the study of modern forms of propaganda which is ultimately the dissection point of all media forms and a way forward for media education, is detailed. Fourthly, how media education is often taught through the arts is examined. Finally, the chapter details views on how media educators are considered to have the capacity to teach children media literacy and to empower them to be active global citizens who are critical consumers and producers of the media in which they are immersed.

The Introduction of New Media Forms inciting Moral Panic

The introduction of new forms of media into Western society, such as the internet, the Apple iPhone and social media has on various occasions given rise to a level of ‘media panic’ that can be described as an exaggerated public concern about the effect of media, especially on children. The resulting exceptional weight often placed on the perceived negative and damaging influence of popular culture upon its typically youthful audience can arise out of attempts to apply an over-simplified singular justification to an extremely wide and complex social phenomenon. Whilst the concern for youth is usually the dominant focus, moral panics about the media can be seen too as a mirror of adult anxieties, involving loss of control, fear of the future, and fear of technological change, and the erosion of societal values. Historically also, there has been a tendency amongst some to see media as the single cause of all forms of juvenile delinquency. Thus, every new form of media technology introduced into society has the potential to induce a level of social anxiety, particularly if it is promoted commercially to amuse children who are not under adult supervision.⁵

⁵ D. Buckingham and H. Strandgaard Jensen, Beyond 'media panics' Reconceptualising public debates about children and media, *Journal of Children and Media*, vol. 6, no. 4 (2012). Pp. 413-429.

Ancient Greece and media

One of the earliest societal concerns about media was expressed in Ancient Greece in 370 B.C.E. In Plato's *Phaedrus* and *The Republic*, there is a discourse that reflects a conflict created by a transition from an oral to a literary culture.⁶ In essence, the controversy was about how the effect of changes in forms of communication could affect personal relationships and the nature of knowledge.

At that point in Western history, promoting the ability to remember things was challenged on the grounds that the written text could be relied upon to 'hold onto' information. Socrates⁷, in Plato's⁸ *Phaedrus*, proposed that the "discovery of the alphabet will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories; they will (give) trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves."⁹ Such questioning was focussed on the written canon regarding its potential to lead a reader to misread intended meaning. Famously, Socrates had embodied his philosophy in that regard by never writing a word down so that our understanding of his words have had to be sought in the writings of his apprentice, Plato.

In the speeches that constitute Plato's *Apology*, the reader is continually reminded of the power and authority of political rhetoric, which Socrates claimed was foreign to his spoken discourse and which threatened his own identity. Much of the underlying reason behind that situation reflected a fear that existed amongst rich influential scholars and their concern about losing power over their less educated and less wealthy subjects. It is through this prism that we

⁶ S. Ahbel-Rappe, *Socrates: A Guide for the Perplexed*. (London, UK: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009).

⁷ [Socrates 469-399 B.C.E.].

⁸ [Plato 427-347 B.C.E.].

⁹ M. McLuhan and Q. Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage*. (London, UK: Penguin Group, 1967).

Note: The book title *The Medium is the Massage* is a play on the often-quoted McLuhan phrase, 'the medium is the message'. Originally a printing error, McLuhan decided that he preferred the new title, stating "The title *The Medium is the Massage* is a teaser- a way of getting attention...And so the title is intended to draw attention to the fact that a medium is not something neutral- it does something to people."

can observe significant parallels when considering instances of moral panic in modern times associated with the introduction of new forms of communication.

Later moral panics

From ancient times in Greece up until the mid-1400s, education was a privilege afforded only to the rich males, and books and other printed materials were not readily accessible to others due to their inability to read. The rich also became more politically powerful once they obtained access to printed material and, therefore, knowledge. In many historical documents, Gutenberg's invention of the movable type printing press in mid-15th century Europe; is purported as one that changed history,¹⁰ however it was actually the Chinese that used these forms of communication first. Emperor He¹¹ of the later Han dynasty officially reported the first use of a form of paper, and then reportedly began the first printed newspaper, *Jing Bao* (originally *Di Bao*) in 713 during the Tang dynasty.¹² Later, Alchemist Bi Sheng started experimenting with movable type from 1041, which was in fact four centuries before the Gutenberg printing press. Further, movable type printing production developed considerably across Asia, particularly in Korea from 1403.¹³ Whilst it is acknowledged that the Chinese used these forms of communications first, Western influences will be explored primarily, as consistent with the Western focus of this thesis.

England's William Claxton 'prototypographer' experimented with a printing press, but it is said that Gutenberg perfected the new artform.¹⁴ Gutenberg has been celebrated for his creation of a "related sequence of inventions involving casting and setting single metal types

¹⁰ J. Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gansta-Rap 1830-1996*. (London, UK: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1998).

¹¹ [Emperor He 25-220 B.S.E].

¹² [Tang Dynasty circa 618-907].

¹³ S. A. Gunaratne, Paper, printing and the printing press: a horizontally integrative macrohistory analysis, *International Communication Gazette*, vol. 63, no. 6 (2001). pp. 459-479.

¹⁴ G. Bullen (ed.), *William Caxton and the Development of the Art of Printing in England and Scotland*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

and printing from them in a press, that first created texts which were comparable in beauty to the finest manuscripts and at the same time distributed in unprecedented quantities.”¹⁵ This capacity for reproduction promoted the notion of universal capacity for education, whilst at the same time establishing the preconditions for the Reformation of the Church and the development of biblical works in multiple languages. Also, it popularised the birth of public opinion mediated through the press, and provided greater capacity for propaganda and bias information to the masses. People from different socioeconomic backgrounds now became literate and through their developing knowledge they began to question government decisions and policy, and the teachings of the religious leaders of the day. As in ancient times, politicians, and clergymen though, became sceptical of the now large-scale access available to the printed word with its power to threaten their control over society. Prior to the advent of the printing press, religious congregations were dependent on clergymen to interpret the Bible. Now, the printed message made it more accessible to the masses. Consequently, people began to interpret the Bible for themselves through their own reading. That independence contributed to the emergence of the Protestant Reformation and the democratisation of education and religion.¹⁶

19th century moral panics

From around 1830, penny gaffs emerged. They were unlicensed temporary theatres set up in urban English cities that provided cheap theatre entertainment. Those theatres were heavily populated by children of the working class. James Grant, the Calvinist editor of the *Morning Advertiser*, calculated that there were between 80 and 100 such gaffs in London at that time, insisting that they were “no better than so many nurseries for juvenile thieves.”¹⁷ They were

¹⁵ S. Fussel, *Gutenberg and the Impact of Printing* (Oxon, UK: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2019). p. 7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gansta-Rap 1830-1996*.

intended primarily for wage-earning children and adolescents of both sexes aged from about eight to 20.

The established penny gaff theatres were feared by Victorian moral reformers as breeding grounds for criminals. It was considered a place where the criminals could have autonomy and corrupt the minds of youth without rebuke.¹⁸ Later on, these simple, low-cost entertainment venues were the target of criticism and were openly blamed for encouraging crime and moral decline amongst poor working-class youth. Also, they had a close relationship with ‘penny dreadfuls’, which were sensational fiction that dramatised urban life and glorified the lives of criminals and highwaymen. Both, it was claimed, enticed juvenile criminality, and led to moral panic campaigns against media.¹⁹

Mass dissemination of news started in the 1830s through a new media form, namely, the penny press, which spread quickly through the Western world. That gave rise to the notion that newspapers had power to be politically influential. Publishers, too, began to choose to be more sensational in their news representation in order to sell papers. That gave rise to the phrase ‘yellow journalism’ which described the style of information presentation. Journalists exaggerated stories, made up fictitious interviews, and focussed on scandals. The public too, started to become aware of the notion of media manipulation as a social phenomenon.²⁰

The 1890s saw the introduction of a new media platform, namely, motion pictures. Very soon after the turn of the century, radio then became a new media phenomenon in homes, broadcasting music, news and radio plays to try to capture audiences. Overall, the new media technology in the domestic environment gave rise to an awareness of the media’s influence as consumption became more personal than previously. Subsequently, in 1930, one of the first

¹⁸ L. Picard, *Victorian London: The Life of a City, 1840-1870*, (London, UK: Phoenix, 2006).

¹⁹ J. Springhall, 'Guilty pleasures': moral panics over commercial entertainment since 1830, *The Historian*, vol. 122, no. 1 (2014). pp. 33-37.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

known examples of media education was published by US university professor, Edgar Dale.²¹ It was in the form of manuals on how teachers could use film and radio for teaching purposes in the classroom.

²¹ R. W. Wagner, Edgar Dale: professional, *Theory Into Practice*, vol. 9, no. 2 (1970). pp. 89-95.

Protectionism Response and the Hidden Political Agenda

In Britain post World War II, the wheels were set in motion to enact the ‘Children and Young Persons Act’²² which prohibited access by British children to a particular type of US horror comic. The campaign that resulted in it being passed was conducted by the British communist party in an effort to defend the nation against US capitalism. Party members believed that the comics available represented US imperialism designed to undermine the independence of ‘traditional’ British culture.

While the British Communist Party was not popular, it championed a moral campaign that gained the support of educators, doctors, clergymen, and other prominent members of society to lend their voice of concern. The National Union of Teachers then took up the cause to pressure Parliament, which banned the comic books in 1954.²³ That action reinforced popular opinion about the perceived harmful effects of certain media on children. On it, theatre historian, Clive Barker stated that the media in this instance was used as a scapegoat to explain a perceived demise of British culture following the War.²⁴ The highly tendentious assault on comic books, occasionally referred to as the British campaign against ‘horror comics’, then, brought together some strange bedfellows. The Established Church²⁵ and the National Union of Teachers, plus the communist infiltrated Comics Campaign Council, together gave voice to an orchestrated rise of negative vocal opinion that demanded urgent government action.²⁶ The 1950s too, saw the moving image introduced to the domestic market through television in homes. Higher technological quality was sacrificed to produce television sets that were

²² United Kingdom Government, *Children and Young Persons Act* (United Kingdom: The National Archives, 1933), Accessed 2 December, 2023. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/23-24/12/contents>.

²³ Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gansta-Rap 1830-1996*.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ [The Church of England was known as the Established church, with the monarch as its Supreme Governor].

²⁶ *Ibid.*

affordable so that they would be accessible to ‘the masses.’ Profit for the networks through advertising revenue followed. At the time, while the role of the audience became more prominent than previously, educators, politicians and parents began to question the influence of the messages presented through the medium. The ideas of Marshall McLuhan, the Canadian scholar who advocated for media literacy education influenced them. Particularly influential was the following of his statement:

media work us over completely. They are so persuasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered. The medium is the message. Any understanding of social and cultural change is impossible without a knowledge of the way media work as environments. All media are extensions of some human faculty—psychic or physical.²⁷

In addition, McLuhan and Carpenter argued that without “an understanding of media grammars, we cannot hope to achieve a contemporary awareness of the world in which we live.”²⁸

On a broader level, however, an initial response to the effects of television was one of fear and trepidation, and the emergence of associated questioning of the effects of media influence throughout the 20th century in the era known as *protectionism* in the media literacy field. The passage of the Video Recordings Bill²⁹ through the British parliament in the early 1980s also merits attention as it was the product of a fabricated ‘moral panic’. Moreover, it dominated British newspaper headlines for weeks on end. The *Daily Mail*, and various powerful moral-interest groups like the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and the Nationwide Festival of Light (NFL), mounted a carefully-orchestrated campaign against the new perceived threat to innocent children which, following campaigner

²⁷ M. McLuhan and E. S. Carpenter, *Explorations in Communication: An Anthology* (Boston, US: Beacon Press, 1960). p. 34.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ United Kingdom Parliament, *Repeal and Revival of Provisions of the Video Recordings Act 1984* (London, UK: Authority of the House of Lords and House of Commons, 1984), Accessed 24 February, 2023. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldbills/022/10022.i-i.html#jVRA02>.

Mary Whitehouse's NFL, they labelled 'video nasties.' Moreover, Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government was anxious to assist in the passage of Bright's bill as the recent dramatic spread of the video-cassette recorder was seen to be responsible, in the panic climate of the times, for a rise in violent crime.³⁰ That bill became law in July 1984 as the Video Recordings Act.³¹ It gave the British Board of Film Classification the strictest powers in Europe to certify and censor purchased home entertainment. The cry of 'children at risk' who needed protection, as film critic Alexander Walker noted, "supplied the motive for a repressive measure affecting every adult in the country."³²

Over the longer period, 'moral panics' demonising commercial forms of entertainment since the early Victorian years had supported a belief that each new form of amusement from cheap theatres onwards has posed a threat by encouraging delinquent tendencies in susceptible children and adolescents. In addition, placing exceptional weight on the perceived malevolent influence of popular culture upon its often-youthful audience generated attempts to apply an over-simplified monocausal model to individual human acts of choice taking place within an historical context of extremely diffuse and complex social phenomena. Yet, overall, environmental, domestic and psychological factors appear to have outweighed forms of popular or mass culture as pre-determinants of juvenile delinquency.³³

In general, media or moral panics often tell us a great deal more about adult anxieties – fear of the future, of technological change and the erosion of moral absolutes – than about the causes of juvenile misbehaviour. Indeed, each new technological breakthrough in mass communications, from the rotary printing press to the cinematograph, to the full-colour book of comics, to the DVD and home computer, has provided a focus for social anxiety, particularly

³⁰ M. Barker, *The Video Nasties : Freedom and Censorship in the Media* (London, UK: Pluto Press, 1984).

³¹ Parliament, *Repeal and Revival of Provisions of the Video Recordings Act 1984*.

³² Barker, *The Video Nasties: Freedom and Censorship in the Media*. p. 11.

³³ J. Springhall, Censoring Hollywood: youth, moral panic and crime/gangster movies of the 1930s, *The Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 32, no. 3 (2004). pp. 135-154.

when exploited commercially to provide a new form of amusement for the young beyond the supervision of ‘responsible’ adults.³⁴ When gangster films appeared in America they created more ‘moral panic’ than any other genre film from Hollywood as they portrayed the urban gangster in exciting, colourful and violent narratives as they outran law makers. Those were extremely popular with audiences. The 1930s, however, saw censorial disapproval of the genre by such Catholic censorship lobbies in America as the Legion of Decency. Judges, lawyers, teachers, policemen, mayors, newspapers, and local authorities of various backgrounds also made their disapproval known, while the introduction of the Hays code was an example of a regulation introduced in response to the associated moral panic.³⁵

Many citizens too believed that films of the type noted above, that were based on the lives and activities of Prohibition-era criminals, led to an increase in juvenile delinquency, and they accused Hollywood of delivering impressionable youth into a career of crime. On that, the supposedly harmful effects of fast-moving and exciting American gangster films plus the reform-school and slum-gang films of the late 1930s that featured the Dead End Kids³⁶ (*Dead End*, *Angels with Dirty Faces*, *Crime School*), became a prominent concern of those in authority. There was a particular eagerness to scapegoat, control and censor this pervasive new mass medium.³⁷

For almost two centuries then, whenever the introduction of a new mass and commercial medium or technology was defined as creating ‘moral panic’ and was deemed to be a threat to the young, a campaign to engage in regulating, banning or censoring it followed.

³⁴ Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gansta-Rap 1830-1996*.

³⁵ Springhall, *Censoring Hollywood: youth, moral panic and crime/gangster movies of the 1930s*, [The Hays code, made mandatory in 1934 was the new Motion Picture Production Code stipulating that Hollywood movies were to endorse ‘proper’ behaviour, respect for Government and Christian values. This code was introduced in response to a perceived general tone of ‘lawlessness’ in the narrative of Hollywood gangster films at that time].

³⁶ [A group of young actors from New York City famous for delinquent films and their real-life destructive antics on the Goldwyn studio lot in 1937].

³⁷ Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gansta-Rap 1830-1996*.

Concurrently, media literacy used to mean being able to read the media, deconstruct the story, and decode what ‘they’ mean for us to believe or do. But in a digital environment in 2024, media literacy now means being able to engage with the environment, tools and platforms of media itself.

David Buckingham, a leading media literacy scholar in the UK, has defined protectionism as having three forms: cultural defensiveness, political defensiveness, and moral defensiveness.³⁸ Cultural defensiveness can result in bias being shown towards older and more traditional forms of media. For example, those who belong to the older generation are seen to question the value of social media today and to value more traditional forms such as the radio. This can also be seen in preferences regarding selection of media content. For example, aesthetic media texts and others designed for niche audiences, like arthouse films, can be seen as more valuable in their contribution to society than those such as music videos deemed ‘trashy’ media forms designed to reach as many people as possible.

A second form of protectionism, namely, political defensiveness, focusses on the notion that people need to be protected from false news dissemination (such as the information tweeted by politicians), propaganda (such as the campaigns created during the Second World War and during modern election campaigns), and false ideologies (such as conspiracy theories and the naturalisation of stereotypes). In a situation, then, where purveyors of ‘fake news’ – and indeed of lies and false promises – routinely use the term to condemn opponents, an impasse seems to have been reached. Yet the claim that we live in a ‘post-truth’ world, in which various ‘alternative facts’ compete for attention, is rather too easy an explanation of what is happening. Moreover, while in some instances the truth is contentious, this doesn’t necessarily imply that there is no truth at all.

³⁸ D. Buckingham, Media education in the UK: moving beyond protectionism, *Journal of Communication*, vol. 48, no. 1 (1998). pp. 33-43.

The term ‘fake news’ too may well have outlived its usefulness as a term to explain certain situations. On that, ‘disinformation’ may now be more appropriate. That refers to a much broader and more pervasive phenomenon, namely, “the deliberate creating and sharing of false and/or manipulated information that is intended to mislead and deceive audiences, either for the purpose of causing harm, or for political, personal, or financial gain.”³⁹

A third form of protectionism, namely, moral defensiveness, relates to the potential effects of sex, violence and consumerism on social morality. The sexualisation of women in music videos, the playing of violent video games, and the effect of junk food advertising on television are all examples of the types of media content that can lead members of society to fear the effects of media, particularly on children. That then can lead to ‘moral panic’, a phrase made famous by South African sociologist Stanley Cohen who stated that it is “the reaction of legislators, educators, and parents to a perceived threat to social norms, when a certain “condition, episode, person or group of people emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests.”⁴⁰ The perceived threats of media content mentioned above also raised fears amongst parents that they would have a bad influence on their children and encourage engagement in the behaviours viewed, thus leading to the demise of moral values.

In response to the fear expressed, many researchers explored the role of the ‘fear factor’ in the field of media education. On that, George Gerbner, at the University of Pennsylvania, coined the term ‘mean world syndrome’, having researched the responses of people with regular exposure to media violence. He concluded that there is a direct correlation between exposure to film violence and an exaggerated perception that there is more violence in society than there actually is.⁴¹ Later, a similar phenomenon regarding media effects was identified,

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ S. Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*. (London, UK: Routledge, 2011). p. 1.

⁴¹ M. Morgan, J. Shanahan, and N. Signorielli, *Living with Television Now: Advances in Cultivation Theory and Research*. (New York, US: Peter Lang, 2012).

namely, the ‘CSI’ effect. That related to an audience’s exaggerated perception that they would be likely to be victims of crime.⁴²

The study of modern propaganda

In the 1960s there was a shift from protecting students from the media to educating them about it. It was during the 1960s and 1970s also that media literacy began to be seen as valuable knowledge for the school classroom. Much of the related development was due to the influence of the Canadian scholar Marshall McLuhan, who wrote the famous book *The Medium is the Massage*. He proposed that media literacy was an essential part of social awareness in the 20th Century:

It is a matter of the greatest urgency that our educational institutions realize that we now have civil war among these environments created by media other than the printed word. The classroom is now in a vital struggle for survival with the immensely persuasive “outside” world created by new informational media. Education must shift from instruction, from imposing of stencils, to discovery- to probing and exploration and to the recognition of the language of forms.⁴³

In essence, McLuhan was interested in the unanticipated consequence of a new media form and his message was to always look beyond the obvious and seek non-obvious changes or effects that were enabled, enhanced, accelerated, or extended by it.

At the time in question, the field of semiotics was also being developed in academic quarters in Europe. Fiske describes semiotics in simplistic terms as, “the relationship between a sign and its meaning; and the way signs are combined into codes.”⁴⁴ Working out of that perspective, the Italian semiotics scholar, Umberto Eco, was an advocate for media education, arguing that “if you want to use television for teaching somebody... you will first have to teach

⁴² N. J. Schweitzer and M. J. Saks, The CSI effect: popular fiction about forensic science affects the public's expectations about real forensic science, *Jurimetrics*, vol. 47, no. 3 (2007), pp. 357-364.

⁴³ M. McLuhan and Q. Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage*. (London, UK: Penguin Group, 1967). p. 100

⁴⁴ J. Fiske and J. Hartley, The Signs of Television, in *Reading Television*, (London, UK: Routledge, 2003). p. 22.

them how to use television.”⁴⁵ Concurrently in the US, school journalism teacher, Elizabeth Thoman, established the magazine *Media Values*. That became highly regarded and was instrumental in inspiring a generation of teachers, parents, and religious leaders to see the essential need for media literacy in society. Later she created a centre for media literacy.

Neil Postman was also a notable influence on the history of media literacy. He advocated the use of inquiry-based learning about current affairs, as well as the study of the media’s role in society. On that, he expressed a belief that “knowledge and social relationships are shaped by symbolic systems, including language and visual media.”⁴⁶

Influenced by the teachings of McLuhan, media education in the mid-1980s, began to grow also in Canada. By 1987, media literacy became mandated as part of the curriculum for English for Year 8 to Year 13 students in Ontario. Also, years later, in 1989, a major resource produced by the Ontario Ministry of Education was the *Media Literacy Resource Guide*.⁴⁷ That was influenced by the work of Australian and UK scholars, particularly Len Masterman’s *Teaching About Television* published in 1980 and *Teaching the Media* published in 1985.

Since the 1980s, too, there has been steady growth in the area of media literacy. This has been facilitated by endorsement by UNESCO, and through conferences bringing media literacy scholars and teachers from different countries together for the purpose of furthering media education’s development. Various high-ranking journals also were established in different countries and provided support for media educators teaching in classrooms. The National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), an organisation with over 4000 members currently that brings media education scholars together every two years was founded. Also, it publishes the *Journal of Media Literacy Education*. Similarly, in Connecticut, in 1994,

⁴⁵ U. Eco, Can television teach? M. Alvarado, E. Buscombe, and C. Collins, (eds.), in *The Screen Education Reader: Cinema, Television, Culture*, (London, UK: Red Globe Press, 1979). p. 71-72.

⁴⁶ M. Yildiz, History of media literacy, in R. Hobbs, et al. (eds.) *The International Encyclopedia of Media Literacy* (Hoboken, US: John Wiley & Sons Inc. 2019). p. 558.

⁴⁷ Ontario Ministry of Education, *Media Literacy Resource Guide: Intermediate and Senior Divisions* (Ontario, Canada: Ontario Ministry of Education, 1989).

the work of academics calling themselves the New London Group was promoted. It was based on their view that media literacy should be relevant to students.⁴⁸

All of the developments noted above reflected an increasing interest in media education demonstrated by teachers in primary and secondary schools and in teacher education programs. The biggest media literacy program in America, Common Sense Media, was established by Jim Steyer in 2003. It arose out of the work of a not-for-profit agency that offers parents and teachers resources and strategies to build media literacy skills in the home and at school. It also provides media review services, curriculum and professional development opportunities for educators through its *Common Sense Education* program. Moreover, its influence is far reaching, reaching 60 per cent of schools in the United States with its Common Sense Education's Digital Citizenship Curriculum, launched in 2010, and collaborating with Project Zero researchers at Harvard Graduate School of Education, with the core business of researching how young people engage with moral and ethical issues in digital life.⁴⁹ Other countries also have media literacy organisations, but not on such a scale.

A shift in pedagogy to a focus on creating ethical consumers and producers of messages

With the rapid advancement of media technologies, media literacy education continues to be a major focus of study in the 21st Century. Yildiz describes the emphasis of media literacy in the 2020s is on the education of young people and preparing them to analyse and produce their own media forms in an ethical manner, seeking “to empower people to create their own media messages, develop information and digital literacy skills, navigate a vast amount of knowledge,

⁴⁸ B. Cope and M. Kalantzis, “Multiliteracies”: new literacies, new learning, *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, vol. 4, no. 3 (2009). pp. 165-195.

⁴⁹ C. James, E. Weinstein, and K. Mendoza, *Teaching Digital Citizens in Today's World: Research and Insights Behind Common Sense K-12 Digital Citizenship Curriculum, Version 2*, (San Francisco, US: Common Sense Media and Project Zero, 2021).
https://www.common sense.org/education/sites/default/files/tlr_component/common_sense_education_digital_citizenship_research_backgrounder.pdf.

avoid spams, and gather trustworthy information.”⁵⁰ In addition, there is a shift towards students being morally responsible agents of change through their production of media messages.

The Pew Research Centre’s annual report on teens, social media and technology provides one reliable indicator of the presence of media in the life of young people in modern times. The most recent survey was conducted with 13 to 17 year olds in 2023. It found that in the United States, 95 percent of teenagers had a smartphone and nearly half of teens reported that they were online “almost constantly.”⁵¹ Regarding that pattern, it can be concluded that it brought to mind that societies have always been shaped more by the nature of the media by which people communicate, than by the content of the communication. This reflects Marshall McLuhan’s belief that “it is impossible to understand social and cultural changes without a knowledge of the workings of media.”⁵² At the same time, it was concluded, that people are often too prone to make technological instruments “the scapegoats for the sins of those who wield them. The products of modern science are not in themselves good or bad; it is the way it is used that determines its value.”

Thinking in a similar vein has resulted in media literacy being defined as the ever-changing set of knowledge, skills and habits of mind required for full participation in a contemporary media-saturated society.⁵³ Relatedly, the most widely accepted definition of

⁵⁰ Yildiz, History of media literacy, p. 560.

⁵¹ M. Anderson, M. Faverio, and J. Gottfried, *Teens, Social Media and Technology 2023* (Washington, DC, US: Pew Research Centre, 2023), <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2023/12/11/teens-social-media-and-technology-2023/>.

⁵² M. McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2001). p. 11 [McLuhan quoting General David Sarnoff’s statement when he received an Honorary degree from the University of Notre Dame in the 1960s].

⁵³ R. Hobbs, *Media Literacy in Action* (Maryland, US: Rowman and Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., 2021). p. 4.

media literacy is ‘the ability to access, analyse, evaluate, and create messages in a wide variety of forms.’⁵⁴

People who are deemed media literate, then, are considered to have a heightened awareness of media and technologies that they apply in the context of their everyday lives. Moreover, certain types of experiences are seen to cause or enable people to shift their perspective on the media environment and to gain critical distance from it in order to really ‘see’ it.⁵⁵ Yet, we are often not aware of how changes in media can shape and change our human experience. For example, according to some researchers, screen time for consumers has increased 60-80% from pre-pandemic levels. Moreover, 38% of people admitting that they are struggling to limit their screen time to a level they feel comfortable with.⁵⁶

Mobile phones used to be large, and calls were very expensive. Calls too were the primary function and caller ID was a later development. Today we use our mobile phones for a myriad of purposes, from online shopping and banking to instant escapism and entertainment through social media. Indeed, for many, the mobile phone has become the hub of everyday living and an extension of many lifestyle activities. At the same time, we are often unaware of the social and intellectual implications that result from this situation.

Back in the 1960s, McLuhan developed a hypothesis to suggest that increased awareness of media might help people to act more humanely.⁵⁷ In particular, he identified the need for humans to identify how media shapes us, to adapt our response, and to use it strategically. Some correspondence was evident in the US, where media literacy education was defined by NAMLE in 2006 as requiring:

⁵⁴ P. Aufderheide, *Media Literacy. A Report of the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy*, (Washington, US: Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program, 1993), <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED365294>.

⁵⁵ Hobbs, *Media Literacy in Action*. p. 4.

⁵⁶ A. Pandya and P. Lodha, Social connectedness, excessive screen time during COVID-19 and mental health: a review of current evidence, *Frontiers in Human Dynamics*, vol. 3, no. 1 (2021). pp. 1-9.

⁵⁷ Hobbs, *Media Literacy in Action*.

active inquiry and critical thinking about the messages we receive and create; expand(ing) the concepts of literacy to include all forms of media (i.e., reading and writing); build(ing) and reinforc(ing) skills for learners of all ages. Like print literacy, those skills necessitate integrated, interactive, and repeated practice; develop(ing) informed, reflective, and engaged participants essential for a democratic society; recogniz(ing) that media are a part of a culture and function as agents of socialization; and affirm(ing) that people use their individual skills, beliefs, and experiences to construct their own meanings from media messages.⁵⁸

Hobbs, in like manner identified the following key learning processes at the heart of media literacy:

Accessing. Locating and selecting appropriate and relevant content, ideas, and information, and accurately comprehending messages.

Analysing. Using critical thinking to analyse the purpose, target audience, quality, veracity, credibility, point of view, and potential effects or consequences of messages.

Creating. Composing or generating media contexts using creativity and confidence in self-expression, with awareness of purpose, audience, genre, form, and composition techniques.

Reflecting. Considering the impact of media and technology on our thinking and actions in daily life and applying social responsibility and ethical principles to our own identity, communication, behaviour, and conduct.

Taking action. Working individually and collaboratively to share knowledge and solve problems in the family, the workplace, and the community, and participating as a member of a community at local, regional, national, and international levels.⁵⁹

Some who took account of such positions argued that media literacy is a transdisciplinary concept intertwined with many fields such as education, communications, sociology, psychology, history and politics.⁶⁰ Similarly it was held that “what it means to be literate, how one can attain media literacy, where it should be taught, and who needs it are matters connected to the history of media innovations, as these developed over time.”⁶¹

It also became more common to distinguish between different forms of literacy. For example, visual literacy is seen as consisting of the competencies required to understand and

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 24.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 5.

⁶⁰ Yildiz, History of media literacy.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* p. 554.

create photography, images, and graphic design. Information literacy relates to the competencies needed to search for, find, and evaluate the quality of information sources. News literacy refers to the acquisition of critical-thinking skills for analysing and judging the reliability of news and information. Data literacy is concerned with the knowledge and competencies associated with understanding, using, critically analysing, and working with data in all its many forms. Moreover, while print-based text appears not to be endangered, in 2024 it interacts with digital technologies and multimodality to create complex texts.⁶²

Media education is often considered to be an arts subject

As both an artistic and educational discipline, “media arts emphasize creative expression and critical analysis of multiple media forms, walking a line between arts, humanities, communications and technology.”⁶³ Also, since it “makes use of various media and draws upon a range of artistic traditions,”⁶⁴ media arts are not informed by any one theoretical or aesthetic tradition. Rather, analysts of media arts “may draw upon frameworks and terminology developed in fields such as cinematic studies, cultural studies, media studies, semiotics, critical theory, and so forth.”⁶⁵ On this, while media arts education “has been critiqued for its emphasis on technical competence and personal expression at the expense of social or political relevance,” media arts initiatives commonly involve “an effort to highlight the integration of theory, production, and politics.”⁶⁶ In addition, media arts have recently been designated within educational policy in certain constituencies “as a fifth arts discipline (along with music, dance, theatre, and visual arts).”⁶⁷ That positions the field between discourses of arts ‘literacies’ and ‘media’ or ‘digital’ literacies. In a similar vein, in 2024, media arts education is seen as a

⁶² Hobbs, *Media Literacy in Action*. p. 10.

⁶³ B. Thevenin, Media arts, in R. Hobbs et al. (eds.) *The International Encyclopedia of Media Literacy* (Hoboken, US: John Wiley & Sons Inc. 2019). pp. 709-715.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p. 709.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p. 709.

domain where students are taught to value the aesthetic qualities of media and the arts while using their creativity for self-expression through creating art and media. Media arts programs are found both inside schools as stand-alone classes and outside of the classroom in community-based as well as after-school programs.⁶⁸ Notwithstanding such diversity though, a potentially unifying explanation of media arts education might include an emphasis on the analysis and creation of multiple media forms. In other words, while the goal may be the production of televised news broadcasts, documentary films, web sites, or video games, students are often engaged in “examining how words, images, sounds, performances, and so on are integrated into multimedia communications and artistic expressions. And this engagement necessarily includes both critical analysis and creative production.”⁶⁹

Currently, some hold, an essential element of media arts literacies for certain educationists should involve “students in critical reflections on their own creative practice.”⁷⁰ To that end, Thevenin states that “in all media arts creators must continually reflect on how their artistic choices contribute to the creation of narrative or communication of ideology.”⁷¹ Moreover, the perceived role of the teacher in the process is to prompt students to consider the consequences of their decisions as they proceed. Thus, Thevenin concludes, “by uniting theory with practice, critical analysis with creative production, media arts educators are preparing their students to become active audiences and thoughtful, informed media producers.”⁷²

Media then, for many is associated with that which is *mediated*, as in pre-produced, produced, and post-produced, completely independently of its audience. This perspective however, while understandable, ignores significant ways in which media arts and performance

⁶⁸ D Kellner and J. Share, Critical media literacy, democracy, and the reconstruction of education, in D. Macedo and R. Shirley (eds.) *Media Literacy: A Reader*. (Steinberg, Denmark: Peter Lang, 2007).

⁶⁹ B. Thevenin, Media arts- creating, P. Jensen, A. Draper, and J. Roni (eds.), *Arts Education and Literacies*, (New York, US: Routledge, 2015) p. 29.

⁷⁰ Thevenin, Media arts- creating.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* p. 35.

⁷² *Ibid.* p. 35.

can work together and artist, work and audience can meet.⁷³ Embracing such a position, Hobbs asserted that the centre of media literacy education “must be the pedagogy of inquiry, which is the act of asking questions about media texts” and that the “cultivation of an open, questioning, reflective and critical stance towards symbolic texts should be the centre pole of the media literacy umbrella.”⁷⁴

The field also has its tensions. Conflicts, for example, have been generated at conferences by “diverse goals, motives and instructional practices.”⁷⁵ In addition, some people are offended by the antimedia (‘kill your television’) tone in the comments of certain participants. Some academics too felt that remarks by teachers and representatives of non-profit groups can be superficial and not sufficiently informed by theory.⁷⁶ Some argue that the critical education objective should be to reverse young people’s unhealthy dependence on media messages and persuade them to shift their interest toward alternative media arts. Others, in contrast, say that they understand mass media consumption to be a natural, developmentally normal part of childhood and adolescence.⁷⁷ As such views gathered pace throughout the world, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, many efforts were undertaken to focus, narrow, and define the scope of media literacy.⁷⁸

In 1993, the Media Literacy National Leadership Conference in the US, educators could not agree on the range of appropriate goals for media education or the scope of appropriate

⁷³ *Ibid.* p. 36.

⁷⁴ R. Hobbs, The seven great debates of the media literacy movement, *Journal of Communication*, vol. 48, no. 10 (1998). p. 27.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* p. 17.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ R. Quin, *Media Education in Western Australia* (Unpublished paper, Perth, Western Australia: Edith Cowan University, 1995); C. Bazalgette, The politics of media education, in M. Alvarado and O. Boyd-Barrett (eds.), *Media Education: An Introduction*. (London, UK: British Film Institute, 1992); C. Bazalgette, An agenda for the second phase of media literacy development, in R. Kubey (ed.), *Media Literacy in the Information Age* (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 1997); Bertelsmann S. *Media as a Challenge-Education as a Task: a Cooperative Project of Athens Academy and the Bertelsmann Foundation*. (Germany: Gutersloh: The Foundation, 1994).

instructional techniques. Drawing on the work of British, Australian, and Canadian educators however, they did state a number of propositions that should be included in the analysis of media messages. They were as follows,

- media messages are constructed.
- media messages are produced within economic, social, political, historical, and aesthetic contexts.
- the interpretative meaning-making processes involved in message reception consist of an interaction between the reader, the text and the culture.
- media have unique “languages,” characteristics which typify various forms, genres and symbol systems of communication.
- media representations play a role in peoples’ understanding of social reality.⁷⁹

Parents too in certain quarters, expressed a general anxiety about the inability of adults to control children’s access to media.⁸⁰ Lined up against them were those who argued that youth could be educated in order to reduce the negative impact of media on them.⁸¹ In addition, their position was often exploited simply for its rhetorical value in conveying to parents and community members the relevance of media literacy education in schools.

The latter position also had its critics. For example, the claim that media literacy can protect young people from negative media influence was problematic for various educators. In Great Britain, it was derided by scholars who argued that such approaches were elitist and based on poorly grounded social science research.⁸² In addition, Buckingham (1993) suggested that by focusing on the problematic features of the mass media, we may neglect young people’s emotional engagement with media more broadly and ignore genuine pleasures they could

⁷⁹ P. Aufderheide, *Media Literacy. A Report of the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy.*

⁸⁰ D. Denby, Buried Alive, in *New Yorker*, vol. 72, no. 19, July 15 (New York City, US: Conde Nast, 1996), <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1996/07/15/buried-alive>.

⁸¹ G. Degaetano and K. Bander, *Screen Smarts: Raising Media Literate Kids* (Boston, US: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 1996).

⁸² J. D. Halloran and M. Jones, The inoculation approach, in M. Alvarado and O. Boyd-Barrett (eds.), *Media Education: An Introduction*. (London, UK: British Film Institute, 1992).

receive. The danger, he added, is that we could promote cynicism and superiority at the expense of promoting real questioning and analysis.⁸³

Too often also, the protectionist stance, it has been argued, can lead to an instructor-focused classroom, where the teacher tells the student the ‘facts’ about media’s negative influence and about the manipulation of messages. The student listens quietly and takes notes for a test. Such an approach to teaching and learning, it has been held, could cause students to parrot the interpretations the teacher offered. In doing so, it was concluded, media literacy education could lose its authenticity and its relevance to students’ lives.⁸⁴

Some educators yet again argued that young people cannot become truly critical consumers of the mass media until they have had the experience of such activities as making photographs, planning and organising ideas through storyboards, writing scripts, and performing in front of a camera, designing their own web pages, and reporting a news story. On this, “the power of technology”⁸⁵ it has been stated, “is unleashed when students can use it in their own hands as authors of their own work and harness it for critical inquiry, self-reflection and creative expression.”⁸⁶ According to this view too, media literacy is incomplete unless students get a lot of experience writing as well as reading media texts. To that end, media production work in Great Britain was used to assess students’ skills,⁸⁷ while in Canada, rubrics

⁸³ D. Buckingham, *Children Talking Television. The Making of Television Literacy* (London, UK: Falmer, 1993).

⁸⁴ D. Buckingham, *Watching Media Learning: Making Sense of Media Education* (London, UK: Falmer, 1990); J. Williamson, How does girl number twenty understand ideology?, *Australian Screen Education*, vol. 40, no. 1 (1981). pp.80-87; Masterman, *Teaching the Media*.

⁸⁵ S. Goodman, Media, technology and education reform: searching for redemption in the digital age, *Video and Learning*, vol. 1 (1996). p. 2.

⁸⁶ R. Stafford, Redefining creativity: extended project work in GCSE media studies, in M. Alvarado and O. Boyd-Barrett (eds.), *Media Education: An Introduction*. (London, UK: British Film Institute, 1992)

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

for evaluating student-created media productions became available to aid teachers, with media production activities included as part of the expectations regarding student work.⁸⁸

Historically, in some schools, video production has been used with those in the lowest tracks in the English or vocational-education curriculum in what Buckingham has called, “institutionalized under achievement.” That has involved ‘low-ability’ students being allowed to ‘play’ with video-based and computer technologies, while ‘high ability’ students have received a more traditional print-based education. Similarly in many U.S. schools and in some European schools too, media production is often the province of the non-readers or the low-ability or ‘behaviour-problem’ students. For them, media production is their last chance before dropping out of school.⁸⁹

Considerable debate also emerged about the merits and pitfalls of using popular media texts in the classroom⁹⁰ with some arguing that “schools, at all levels, are constituted to devalue popular culture, including its electronically mediated forms.”⁹¹ However, it was recognised too that texts from popular culture can be used to challenge and disrupt the routines of the classroom and provide opportunities for teachers and students to discuss epistemological issues relevant to students’ growing understanding of the processes involved in learning and communication.⁹² According to this argument, the texts of everyday life, when constituted as

⁸⁸ C. Worsnop, Assessing media work, *Education Forum: The Magazine For Secondary School Professionals*, vol. 23, no. 2 (1997), p. 31.

⁸⁹ P. Fraser, Teaching TV cartoons, in M. Alvarado and O. Boyd-Barrett (eds.), *Media Education: An Introduction*. (London, UK: British Film Institute, 1992) pp. 345-349; R. Hobbs, Pedagogical issues in US media education, *Communication Yearbook*, vol. 17, no. 1, (1994). pp. 453-466.

⁹⁰ P. Greenaway, Media and arts education: A global view from Australia, R. Kubey (ed.), *Media Literacy Around the World*. (New York, US: Routledge, 1997); A. Hart, Textual pleasures and moral dilemmas: Teaching media literacy in England, R. Kubey (ed.), *Media Literacy in the Information Age*. (New York, US: Routledge, 1997).

⁹¹ S. Aronowitz and H. Giroux, The punishment of disciplines: cultural studies and the transformation of legitimate knowledge, in *Postmodern Education- Politics, Culture, and Social Criticism*. (Minneapolis, US: University of Minnesota Press, 1991). p. 153.

⁹² M. Dewing, *Beyond TV: Activities for Using Video with Children*. (Santa Barbara, US: ABC-Clio Inc, 1992); H. A. Giroux, *Disturbing Pleasures: Learning Popular Culture*. (New York, US: Taylor and Francis Ltd. 2012).

objects of social knowledge, can provide the opportunity for combining textual, historical, and ideological analyses in ways that can help students and teachers move beyond the limits of traditional disciplines and subject areas.

As stated in the introduction to this chapter too, media literacy is considered by some to be a constellation of life skills necessary for full participation in our media saturated and information-rich society.⁹³ The assumption underpinning that view is that media refers to all electronic and digital means and print and to artistic visuals used to transmit messages to an audience. In the same light, though, and more specifically, media literacy can be defined as an ability to gain access to, analyse, evaluate, create and act using forms of communication.⁹⁴ The term also is often used to describe a learning outcome of media education and media studies offered in schools, universities, and community-based programs. In particular, it can involve encoding and decoding messages transmitted through the media and acquiring the ability to synthesise, analyse and produce mediated messages. In that regard, media literacy has traditionally been conceived as a process or set of skills based on critical thinking.

Conclusion

Since our links to Ancient Greece to the 21st century, it has been a characteristic of human nature for individuals to question messages presented to them, and particularly by those with a perceived authority. Taking this as background, the rest of this chapter explored first, the history of the introduction of new media forms inciting moral panic. Secondly, societal protectionist responses to a perceived moral decline were considered. Thirdly, the study of modern propaganda, which is ultimately the dissection point of all media forms and a way forward for media education, was detailed. Fourthly, how media education is often taught

⁹³ R. Hobbs, *Digital and Media Literacy: A Plan of Action; A White Paper on the Digital and Media Literacy Recommendations of the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy*.

⁹⁴ (NAMLE), *Core Principles of Media Literacy Education in the United States*.

through the arts was examined. Finally, the chapter detailed views on how media educators are considered to have the capacity to teach children media literacy and to empower them to be active global citizens who are critical consumers and producers of the media in which they are immersed.

CHAPTER 3

MEDIA STUDIES INTERNATIONALLY

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the background to the current state of media education in schools internationally. On that, ‘media literacy’ is a term commonly used to describe the learning outcome of media education or media studies in schools, universities, and community-based programs. Traditionally it has been conceived as a process or set of skills based on critical thinking and it has a long history of being viewed as being positioned between the aim of providing protection for students and of facilitating their participation in communication.

Teaching about media sometimes takes place across the curriculum. More commonly, though, it is taught as a discrete subject of knowledge in secondary schools, and is usually titled ‘media studies’ or, more broadly, ‘media education’. As a result, these terms along with ‘media literacy’, are used interchangeably in this chapter, thus reflecting a common practice in the academic literature. Overall, too, the focus is largely on media education in the secondary school sector since that is the area of major interest in this thesis.

The exposition that follows is in four sections. First, pedagogical challenges that have been highlighted by scholars in the field are detailed. Secondly, general international trends are outlined. Thirdly, a range of associated developments in a number of countries are considered. Finally, a brief overview of the situation in Australia is presented.

Pedagogical Challenges in the field

The following statement by Dezuanni reflects a fear that has prevailed since the introduction and development of most forms of ‘new media’ in the 20th century:

In the 80 plus years since the Payne Fund Studies in America set out to understand the effects of cinema on children, the question of young people’s agency with media has persisted as a social concern. Television, comic books, video games, the home rental market for ‘video nasty’ horror films in the 1980s, heavy metal rock music, the

Dungeons and Dragons board game, the internet, social media and online gaming have all raised concern- if not moral panic- about young people's ability to act in and upon the world consciously, morally, ethically, safely and responsibly¹

As a response to the position detailed above, many media education initiatives around the world were protectionist responses to fear. Indeed, until the early 1960s, media education as a form of inoculation translated to pedagogies focused on resistance to media.²

More recently, the rapidly changing landscape of the internet and Web 2.0 technologies (the second generation of internet technologies supporting consumer interaction) and Web 3.0 technologies (the third generation of internet technologies based on mass collected and processed data, artificial intelligence technologies, and personal algorithms), and their prolific interaction with traditional media, such as the live streaming of television, Siri on smartphones³ and artificially created actors on social networking platforms, have acted to challenge the distinction between what was considered traditional media and what is considered new media.⁴ For quite some time, schools have taught traditional media as media studies and new media such as that related to computing information technologies. Yet, at all times there have been overlaps. A new convergence since the emergence of Web 2.0 in the early 2000s⁵, however, has blurred the lines between them. In association with that, significant discussion has been taking place around the notion of combining media studies and computer studies into one field of knowledge in schools. As a result, educationists in a number of countries are already referring to digital media as a subject that encompasses all media.

The shift noted above not only marks a change in the structure of media education, but it also connects with new education policies requiring students to develop a sense of agency.

¹ M. Dezuanni, Agentive realism and media literacy, *Journal of Media Literacy*.

² L. Masterman, *Teaching the Media*.

³ E. Mixon and C. Steele, Siri. *Tech Target Mobile Computing*, (Accessed, 12 December, 2023). <https://www.techtarget.com/searchmobilecomputing/definition/Siri>.

⁴ G. Ptaszek, Media education 3.0? How big data, algorithms, and A.I. redefine media education, D. Frau-Meigs et al. (eds.), *The Handbook of Media Education Research*, (Newark, US: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2020). p. 230.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 229.

Modern curriculum developments call for students to not only critique the world around them, but to consider their civic responsibility as well to act as global citizens. As a result, media education models are being shifted to being geared to empower young people to be agents of political, economic and social change in a media-saturated world. On that, it has been concluded that issues facing all societies “include ethical implications of scientific progress and technology, demographic pressure, accelerated urbanization, increasing calls for social justice and cohesion, the role of young people as agents of change.”⁶

Since the advent in the 1960s and 1970s of media studies as a subject taught in schools, there has been tension between the value placed on media production as a learning strategy and the value placed on studying theory to assist one in critiquing the media. Concurrently, since 2018 there has been an increase in international collaboration between OECD nations in identifying the needs of media literacy education across the globe. On that, media education experts at The Media and Information Literacy Clearinghouse that is hosted jointly by UNAOC United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, emphasise that:

Media literacy programs should be implemented in schools, particularly at the secondary level, to help develop a discerning and critical approach to news coverage by media consumers and to promote media awareness and development of internet literacy to combat misperceptions, prejudices and hate speech.⁷

In a summary of their findings, ‘experts’ across the globe also detailed major perceived challenges for media literacy and implementation.⁸ Those from Armenia, China, Greece, Russia and Serbia identified resistance of such administrative bodies as education boards. Those from Armenia, Greece, Hungary identified an overloaded curriculum. Those from Belgium, Canada, Greece, Hungary, Mexico, Russia, Spain, US sought improved initial and

⁶ United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *Medium-Term Strategy, 2014-2021*.

⁷ MILUNESCO, *About: Media and Information Literacy Clearinghouse*.

⁸ A. Fedorov, A. Levitskaya, and E. Camarero, Curricula for media literacy education according to international experts, *European Journal of Contemporary Education*.

continuing preparation for teachers. Experts from Israel, Russia, and Slovakia highlighted the need for the development of the critical thinking towards the media. Those from Hungary, Serbia, Spain, Russia, Thailand and the US argued for a need for the development of high-level research and curriculum proposals.

To put the latter matters in context, it is helpful to consider that much of the early development of media studies in the Western world was based on the views of Masterman as outlined in his book, *Teaching the Media*. He advocated as follows for developing students' critical autonomy:

You can teach about the media most effectively, not through a content-centered approach, but through the application of a conceptual framework which can help pupils to make sense of any media text. And that applies every bit as much to the new digitized technologies as it did to the old mass media...The acid test of whether a media course has been successful resides in students' ability to respond critically to media texts they will encounter in the future. Media education is nothing if it is not an education for life.⁹

Nevertheless, media literacy is not deemed important in certain countries. In others, it is even resisted by regimes whose leaders do not want people to think critically. Traditionally, too, it has not been attractive to communists. Moreover, in China, with its patriarchal system, students are expected to learn only what are referred to as 'correct' values and knowledge. The same situation applies in North Korea, where the State, through its control of education, while emphasising science and technology to boost the economy, places constraints on the free-thinking of education authorities by the Bureau of Political Ideas Education.¹⁰

Some General International Trends

Walkosz, Jolls and Sund (2008) have pointed out that media literacy, which has survived through the years largely as a grass roots movement, slowly but surely developed around the

⁹ L. Masterman, *Voices of Media Literacy: International Pioneers Speak: Len Masterman Interview Transcript*, interviewed by D. Morganthaler (2010). <https://www.medialit.org/reading-room/voices-media-literacy-international-pioneers-speak-len-masterman-interview-transcript>.

¹⁰ D. H. Kim, The politics and poetics of North Korean Juche cinema, *Asian Cinema*, vol. 25, no. 2 (2014). pp. 205-222.

world.¹¹ Moreover, thanks to the support of such global organisations as UNESCO, it has continued to gain recognition and legitimacy worldwide.¹² This is particularly so in relation to the so-called ‘mass media’ or ‘traditional media’, as it is to the ‘new media’, digital media, and information and communication technology.¹³ To a certain extent, that is because, with the vast amount of information available and the advent of an increase in misinformation or disinformation¹⁴ having an influence on democratic coexistence, many around the world are starting to turn to media education to address the situation.¹⁵ As with the struggle in the past too, media studies has largely been kept at the margins of contemporary schooling, with policymakers regarding media literacy as a ‘quick fix’ solution for perceived problems that media creates.

Whilst the embracement of media education has been moderately successful in some countries, including France, Great Britain, Canada, Australia and the US, the authors of the *Riga Recommendations on Media and Information Literacy in a Shifting Media and Information Landscape*, felt obliged to call on other member states to take action to:

..ensure that MIL programmes and policy are developed as central to national and international policies designed to promote civic participation in democratic life by spreading information, knowledge, awareness and skills that will enable people to enjoy the benefits of the new communications environment.¹⁶

¹¹ B. Walkosz, T. Jolls, and M. Sund, *Global/local: Media Literacy for the Global Village*, OfCom International Research Forum, (London, UK, 2008), https://www.medialit.org/sites/default/files/33_globallocal.pdf. pp. 14-16.

¹² T. Jolls and C. Wilson, The core concepts: fundamental to media literacy yesterday, today and tomorrow, *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, vol. 6, no. 2 (2014), pp. 68-78.

¹³ J. Mateus, P. Andrada, and M. Quiroz, *The State of Media Education in Latin America* (London, UK: Routledge, 2019).

¹⁴ [Misinformation is false information that is spread due to ignorance or mistake and disinformation. Disinformation is false information designed to deliberately mislead and influence public opinion to obscure the truth for malicious or deceptive purposes].

¹⁵ M. Bulger and P. Davison, *The promises, challenges and futures of media literacy*.

¹⁶ Mateus, Andrada, and Quiroz, *The State of Media Education in Latin America*.

In addition, some clear indications on the way forward have been provided by a number of principles fundamental to the wide variety of approaches that exist. On the latter, Masterman, back in 1989, outlined 18 principles that still resonate today in media education. Those were:

1. Media education is a serious and significant endeavour.
2. The central unifying concept of media education is that of representation.
3. Media education is a lifelong process.
4. Media education aims to foster critical autonomy.
5. Media education is investigative.
6. Media education is topical and investigative.
7. Media education is topical and opportunistic.
8. Media education's key concepts are analytical tools rather than an alternative content.
9. Content, in media education, is a means to an end: the ability of students to apply their critical thinking to new situations with motivation and commitment.
10. Evaluation and media education means that student self-evaluate, both in terms of formative and summative evaluation.
11. Media education attempts to change the relationship between teacher and taught by offering both objects for reflection and dialogue.
12. Media education carries out its investigations through dialogue rather than discussion.
13. Media education is essentially active and participatory, fostering the development of more open and democratic pedagogues. It encourages students to take more responsibility for and control over their own learning, to engage in joint planning of the syllabus, and to take longer-term perspectives on their own learning. In short, media education is as much about the new ways of working as it is about the introduction of a new subject area.
14. Media education involves collaborative learning.
15. Media education consists of both practical criticism over cultural reproduction.
16. Media education is a holistic process.
17. Media education is committed to the principle of continuous change.
18. Underpinning media education is a distinctive epistemology.¹⁷

¹⁷ L. Masterman, *Media Awareness Education: Eighteen Basic Principles*, Center for Media Literacy, <http://www.medialit.net/reading-room/media-awareness-education-eighteen-basic-principles>

Potter also identified seven skills of media literacy: analysis (breaking down a message into meaningful elements), evaluation (judging the value of an element; the judgment is made by comparing the element to some standard), grouping (determining which elements are alike in some way; determining which elements are different in some way), induction (inferring a pattern across a small set of elements, then generalising the pattern to all in the set), deduction (using general principals to explain particulars), synthesis (assembling elements into a new structure), and abstracting (creating a brief, clear and accurate description capturing the essence of a message in a similar number of words than the message itself).¹⁸

Another trend at the time was the emergence of many powerful public defences of media studies as a worthy area of research and teaching. For example, Professor John Ellis of Royal Holloway, University of London, formerly a TV producer and later leading light in the field, gave a vigorous response in 2015 to one attack on media studies in which it was termed a ‘Mickey Mouse’ subject. In a similar vein, Professor James Curran of Goldsmiths College, The University of London,¹⁹ delivered an influential keynote address to the 2013 Media Communication and Cultural Studies annual conference entitled ‘Mickey Mouse squeaks back.’ In it, he identified a “long term press crusade against media education”²⁰ and put forward a strong justification of its place in the academy. His conclusion was that, far from being a soft option, courses in media studies were often highly demanding academically and made vigorous intellectual demands of their students. A further trend that can be observed in the development of media education is that students have been called upon to become agents of change as ‘prosumers’²¹ in the developing convergent media age. Modern key media education theorists, such as Britain’s David Buckingham, for example, have provided insights into how imperative

¹⁸ W. J. Potter, *Media Literacy*. (Thousand Oaks, US: Sage, 2005).

¹⁹ Curran, J., Seaton, J. *Power without Responsibility: The Press and Broadcasting and the Internet in Britain*. (London, UK: Routledge 2018).

²⁰ As cited in, D. Buckingham, *The Media Education Manifesto* (Cambridge, UK.: Polity Press, 2019). p.2.

²¹ [Individuals who both consume and produce]

it is for students to go beyond just critiquing the rapidly changing media world. He also endorsed a form of literacy that calls on students to become responsible and active citizens in such a world. As well as that, the convergence of older mass media and new digital media may provide unprecedented capacity for consumers to comment on and create media messages, and that it is essential for all students to become literate in this form of knowledge.

Buckingham advocated for media education for all young people at a time of a shifting digital landscape. In relation to that, he stated:

Understanding the media today requires us to recognise the complexity of modern forms of ‘digital capitalism’. And if we really want citizens to be media literate, we need comprehensive, systematic and sustained programmes of media education as a basic entitlement for all young people.²²

Similarly, Renee Hobbs (2021), a leading US modern literacy media theorist, highlighted key ideas around the fundamental practices of media literacy education emerging in the US, as identified in the NAMLE draft framework in 2006. Media literacy education, she argued:

- Requires active inquiry and critical thinking about the messages we receive and create;
- Expands the concept of literacy to include all forms of media (i.e. reading and writing);
- Builds and reinforces skills for learner of all ages. Like print literacy, those skills necessitate integrated, interactive, and repeated practice;
- Develops informed, reflective, and engaged participants essential for a democratic society;
- Recognises that media are a part of culture and function as agents of socialisation; and
- Affirms that people use their individual skills, beliefs, and experiences to construct their own meanings from media messages.

Taking account of all of that, Hobbs defined media literacy as “the ever-changing set of knowledge, skills, and habits of mind required for full participation in a contemporary media-

²² D. Buckingham, Introduction, *The Media Education Manifesto*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2019). p. 2.

saturated society.”²³ She expressed a belief too, that media literacy has the capacity to shift people’s “perspective on the media environment, to gain critical distance from it in order to really ‘see’ it.”²⁴

Hobbs argued further that modern media literacy can create a form of ‘positive protection’ that has the potential to empower students to be critical consumers and producers of media messages. Evidence suggests too that media literacy can help to minimise harm brought about by media usage and exposure for example. In a meta-analysis of 51 studies of media literacy interventions, Jeong, Cho and Hwang concluded that those had a substantial effect on various aspects of media literacy amongst participants, including in relation to media knowledge, self-efficacy, criticism, understanding of realism, influence, beliefs, attitudes and behaviour.²⁵ Likewise, Hobbs argued that media literacy education form a positive protection that can help address people’s natural tendencies to actively imitate and uncritically accept behaviours and values presented in mass media and popular culture.²⁶ As a result of such research, a regular position adopted currently is that modern media literacy can empower students to identify and critique messages and to determine positive and harmful messages and usage for themselves.

Hobbs further suggested that, universally, those involved in media literacy education typically engage with the following ideas:

Accessing.	Locating and selecting appropriate and relevant content, ideas, and information, and accurately comprehending messages;
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²³ R. Hobbs, What is media literacy?, N. Mandziuk and E. Swayze (eds.) in *Media Literacy in Action*, (Maryland, US: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021). p. 4.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 4.

²⁵ S. Jeong, H. Cho, and Y. Hwang, Media Literacy interventions: A meta-analytic review, *Journal of Communication*, vol. 62, no. 3 (2012). pp. 454-472.

²⁶R. Hobbs, Protection from harmful media. N. Mandziuk and E. Swayze (eds.) in *Media Literacy in Action*, (Maryland, US: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021). p. 4.

- Analyzing.** Using critical thinking to analyze the purpose, target audience, quality, veracity, credibility, point of view, and potential effects or consequences of messages;
- Creating.** Composing or generating media content using creativity and confidence in self-expression, with awareness of purpose, audience, genre, form, and composition techniques;
- Reflecting.** Considering the impact of media and technology on our thinking and actions in daily life and applying social responsibility and ethical principles to our own identity, communication behavior, and conduct;
- Taking action.** Working individually and collaboratively to share knowledge and solve problems in the family, the workplace, and the community, and participating as a member of a community at local, regional, national, and international levels.²⁷

She concluded that these concepts are based on ten fundamental propositions that have a broad application to the social practice of modern media literacy.

Hobbs summarised her thinking as follows:²⁸

²⁷ Hobbs, *Digital and Media Literacy: A Plan of Action; A White Paper on the Digital and Media Literacy Recommendations of the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy*.

²⁸ R. Hobbs, A theoretical framework for media literacy, in N. Mandziuk and E. Swayze (eds.) *Media Literacy in Action*, (Maryland, US: Rowman and Littlefield, 2021). p. 30.

Media Literacy Theoretical Framework

DOMAINS	CONCEPTS	CLAIMS
Authors and Audiences (AA)	<i>Author</i>	1. Authors create media messages for different purposes. 2. Authors target specific audiences. 3. People interpret messages in relation to the context in which they experience them and the context in which they were produced. 4. Both authors and audiences add value as part of an economic and political system.
	<i>Purpose</i>	
	<i>Audience</i>	
	<i>Usage</i>	
	<i>Interpretations</i>	
	<i>Context</i>	
Messages and Meanings (MM)	<i>Systems</i>	5. Production techniques are used to construct messages. 6. The content of media messages contain values, ideology, and specific points of view. 7. Messages impact people's attitudes and behaviors.
	<i>Ideas</i>	
	<i>Emotions</i>	
	<i>Techniques</i>	
	<i>Ideology</i>	
Representation and Realities (RR)	<i>Effects</i>	8. Messages are selective representations of reality. 9. Messages use stereotypes to express ideas and information. 10. People judge the credibility of media messages using features like authority and authenticity.
	<i>Representation</i>	
	<i>Stereotypes</i>	
	<i>Authority</i>	
	<i>Authenticity</i>	

Increasingly too, there has been a recognition that much of current media literacy theory is written or presented in English and from a Western hegemonic perspective. Thus, the argument goes, it represents dominant Western ideologies and ‘works’ for purposes of dominant groups in the Western world. On that, attention has been given to an associated challenge that exists for some nations to develop curricula suited to their unique cultures instead of importing one from a dominant culture. A consequence in some situations is the emergence of isolation and disempowerment in the field of media education in certain non-English speaking nations.

Developments in Particular Countries

In some countries, such as Australia and the United Kingdom, media literacy is taught as a discrete subject. In others, it is taught across the curriculum through various subjects, including languages and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). In others, yet again it is

taught in both ways. An overview on the situation across a range of countries that Australian educators regularly look to for ideas is now detailed.

The United Kingdom

There is a long history of media education in the UK, with the he first O level²⁹ examination in film studies held in 1973.³⁰ At the same time, those involved with the subject area faced a struggle similar to that experienced in certain other Western nations because of the stigma associated with it being seen as a non-core ‘soft subject’ for non-academic students in schools in lower socio-economic areas. That sentiment was echoed by a Headmaster at Harrow, in England, declaring that “more children who were eligible for free school meals sat GCSEs in media studies than in physics, chemistry and biology combined.”³¹ A decline in the number of students taking media studies in the UK also came about in the early years of the 21st century. On that, a drop took place from 70,000 in 2008 to 50,000 in 2014. Also, an extremely low number of students engaged in teacher preparation in the area.³² Relatedly, Andrew Crisell, Emeritus Professor at Sunderland University, stated that the key to media studies’ associated image problem lay in its association with leisure because “traditionally media have been associated with recreation, and there is a general assumption that watching films or television involves less intellectual effort than reading a book.”³³

Media studies is taught in upper secondary schools in the UK as *Film Studies* and *Media Studies* at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and

²⁹ [O (Ordinary) Level was UK national qualification for high school graduation students not intending to pursue university education that was replaced by the GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) in 1987].

³⁰ D. Buckingham, *Media education in the UK: moving beyond protectionism*. pp. 33-43.

³¹ R. Williams, 'Worthless qualifications' give false hope to state pupils, say Harrow Head, *The Guardian* (22 January, 2010) <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2010/jan/22/deceive-children-worthless-qualifications>.

³² S. Rustin, *Media Studies: why does the subject get such bad press?* *The Guardian* (8 February, 2016), <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/feb/08/media-studies-bad-press-alevel-soft-option>.

³³ *Ibid.*

second year AS (A2) levels. After the Conservative party took office nationally in 2016, there was a shift to make all GCSE and A level subjects more academic, with an increased emphasis on external written examinations instead of school-based assessment. In the reformed GCSE, AS and A2 levels curricula in 2017, it was mandated that the proportion of non-examination assessments be decreased to align with its new focus on external written examinations.³⁴ That shift was not received favourably by media educationists in their responses to the Board of Education, with a majority favouring a higher weighting being given to non-written examination assessment. They emphasised in particular the importance of practical work in the subject and argued that necessary skills cannot be easily developed outside of practical tasks to engage students.³⁵ Another shift in thinking around media studies in the UK resulted in the convergence of traditional media with digital media or information technologies. On that, leading UK media literacy scholars reported that the boundaries between information media and other forms of media had become increasingly blurred and that “media literacy provides a means of connecting classroom uses of technology with the techno-popular culture that increasingly suffuses children’s leisure time – and it does so in a critical, rather than a celebratory way.”³⁶ Concurrently, the subject Information Technologies (IT), also known in schools as ‘computing studies’ is seen to fulfil a function of providing skills in computer technologies for the workplace. The priority within this field of knowledge is with how to gain access to information on the internet and with ways to protect oneself from dangers associated with cyber security risks. By contrast, there is rarely much discussion about symbolic or persuasive aspects of digital media, emotional dimensions of consumption and interpretations.

³⁴ Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual), *Confirmed Assessment Arrangements for Reformed GCSE, AS And A Level Qualifications for First Teaching in 2017* (United Kingdom: Crown, 2016).

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ D. Buckingham, *Defining digital literacy- what do young people need to know about digital media?*, pp. 21-34.

On the matter, Buckingham suggested that further developments in media studies in the UK should involve incorporating the digital technologies usually studied in the subject entitled ‘information technologies’ so that gaps created by adopting a functionalist approach in the latter area could be addressed by providing a critical lens under a new approach called ‘digital literacy’. He went on:

With the growing convergence of media (which is driven by commercial forces as much as by technology), the boundaries between information and other media have become increasingly blurred. In most children’s leisure-time experiences, computers are much more than devices for information retrieval: they convey images and fantasies, provide opportunities for imaginative self-expression and play, and serve as a medium through which intimate personal relationships are conducted. These media cannot be adequately understood if we persist in regarding them simply as a matter of machines and techniques, or as hardware and software. The internet, computer games, digital video, mobile phones and other contemporary technologies provide new ways of mediating and representing the world, and of communicating. Outside school, children are engaging with these media, not as technologies but as cultural forms. If educators wish to use these media in schools, they cannot afford to neglect these experiences: on the contrary, they need to provide students with means of understanding them. This is the function of what I am calling digital literacy.³⁷

Currently, educationists and policy makers in other lands have responded to calls like this by merging digital technologies and traditional media areas into one academic subject.

Canada

Canada has been home to some of the leading thinkers internationally on media theory for some time. The original influence on the dominant communication theory embraced at the University of Toronto was the work of Eric A. Havelock and Harold Innis in the 1930s.³⁸ Later, their position came into prominence following contributions by Edmund Snow Carpenter, Northrop Frye, and pop culture favourite, Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan is famous for coining the expression ‘the medium is the message’ and the term ‘the global village.’³⁹ He was a teacher

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ M. Soules, *Introduction to Canadian Media Theorists: Tricksters on the Margins*. Media Studies.ca. (Accessed January 10, 2024), <https://www.media-studies.ca/articles/trickster.htm>. <https://www.media-studies.ca/articles/trickster.htm>.

³⁹ M. Mead, *Training for a Skilled Workforce: Review of the National Training Reform Agenda*, Strategic Issues Forum (Australia: Committee for Economic Development of Australia, 1995).

and notable academic at the University of Toronto. He was also popular because of his thoughts around pedagogy, particularly regarding what he advocated for the post-literate electronic era and the use of ‘active learning pedagogies’. The latter he defined as instructional methods that engage students in the learning process that are meaningful to them through activities and though reflection. McLuhan’s ideas on education, and specifically on the kind of pedagogy that he deemed to be desirable, are still foundational for media literacy education today. Even though he died in 1980, his theories continue to resonate with current thinking around media theory and the way that media education is being shaped internationally. Rather than simply studying the media, he argued, he wanted us to think about process and interaction when we think about the impact of communications technology on culture. This interaction perspective, many hold, is pertinent in this modern age where we find social media and mass communication exists on an unfathomable scale. McLuhan’s legacy ensured that media literacy continues to be mandated in schools in Toronto for every year group. Relatedly, the Ontario education system is viewed as a world leader in the field of media literacy,⁴⁰ with its *Media Literacy Resource Guide* for teachers, sums up the goals of media education through gaining media literacy as follows:

The media...provide not only information about the world, but also ways of seeing and understanding it... Media literacy enables teachers and students to challenge the great inequalities in knowledge and power that exist between those who manufacture information in their own interests and those who consume it innocently as news or entertainment.⁴¹

The focus of Canadian media education is consistent also with a new shift in media-education thinking internationally, namely a view that students once empowered by media literacy, can be agents of change. To that end, the focus stated is to “encourage youth to be responsible, creative and critically engaged users of networked technology, we need to stop trying to scare

⁴⁰ B. Zwicker, Media literacy that excludes a planet at risk is not agency, *Journal of Media Literacy*, vol. 64, no. 1&2 (2017), pp. 27-33.

⁴¹ Ontario Ministry of Education, *Media Literacy Resource Guide: Intermediate and Senior Divisions* (1989). p. 232.

them into following the rules and instead teach them to know and exercise their rights as informed and engaged digital citizens.”⁴² Whilst Canada’s approach to teaching media literacy across the curriculum is a deliberate and focussed approach, it has its challenges also. Media literacy teachers in Canadian schools, for example use a variety of pedagogical approaches and finds their subject housed in a range of curricular domains, including language arts, social studies and visual arts (where one finds a readings-focused approach) and in communication technology (ICT) courses (that are primarily production focussed). In adopting such a ‘subsection approach’ one runs the risk, it is held, of the area becoming one embracing a ‘tick off the check list’ approach for busy teachers, where students are not helped to engage deeply with media concepts.⁴³

United States of America

Following the politically polarising situation centred on the 2016 Presidential election campaign that exploited social media handlers to swing voters through ‘fake news’, people in the US are very cynical regarding the media. In the campaign, Donald Trump “gave license to civil disobediences, xenophobia, misogyny and division”.⁴⁴ During his presidency too, Trump continued his campaign agenda through the social media platform of Twitter, using quotes such as “sorry losers and haters, but my I.Q. is one of the highest- and you all know it! Please don’t feel so stupid or insecure, it’s not your fault!”⁴⁵ Twitter provided an instantaneous unfiltered platform for such expressions. Following the 2016 US election, ‘fake news’ was used to describe various propaganda and false information circulated by social media personnel and

⁴² M. Johnson, Towards a rights-based vision of digital literacy, vol. 64, no. 1&2, *Journal of Media Literacy*, (2017). p. 47.

⁴³ M. Hoechsmann and C. Wilson, Media literacy in Canada, in R. Hobbs et al. (eds.) *The International Encyclopedia of Media Literacy* (Hoboken, US: John Wiley & Sons Inc. 2019). p. 887.

⁴⁴ D. Anderson and C. Arcus, From the guest editors, *Journal of Media Literacy*, vol. 64, no. 1&2 (2017), p. 3.

⁴⁵ A. Alidina, *Donald Trump's 11 best Tweets (and 7000 losers)*, Crowdbabble, (Accessed 24 May, 2020), <https://www.crowdbabble.com/blog/the-11-best-tweets-of-all-time-by-donald-trump>.

those using so-called ‘alternative news sites.’ The volume and character of the messages, some hold, spawned a crisis in US media culture. The resulting distrust of the media and democratising of it has created its own challenges. For example, the saturation of information has produced an environment conducive to manipulation, misinformation and propaganda being consumed by young people, who are usually both vulnerable and exploitative of the media simultaneously. A response to the situation was a substantial commitment to media literacy being made through various avenues. Programs, funding and initiatives for media literacy in the US in 2017 involved the establishment of the NAMLE. Moreover, \$1M in grants was awarded to 20 media literacy programs by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.⁴⁶

Formal media education and curriculum initiatives in some states in the US, and associated research on media had commenced much earlier, though, in the late 1970s. However, since curriculum is the responsibility of the individual states, there is no US national curriculum or guidance provided on teaching media literacy, and no dedicated government funding to offer professional development to teachers across the nation.⁴⁷ There are, although, a number of politically strong agencies that work on the promotion of media education on a political and functional level.

Established in 1997, the National Association for Media Education (NAMLE) is the largest media literacy agency in the US. Its core principle is stated as follows:

As the field of media literacy education has matured over the past 25 years, its focus has evolved from WHAT is taught to HOW we teach. *The Core Principles of Media Literacy Education* is a NAMLE project that aims to expand the boundaries of the field and harness the opportunities and possibilities of 21st century learning technologies to transform both learning and teaching, from kindergarten to college.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Hobbs, *Digital and Media Literacy: A Plan of Action; A White Paper on the Digital and Media Literacy Recommendations of the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy*.

⁴⁷ D. Lemish, *Children and Media: A Global Perspective* (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2015).

⁴⁸ National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), *Legislation* (NAMLE, Accessed 3 July 2023), <https://namle.net/about/legislation>.

NAMLE declares, too, that it is proud to be included and consulted in many national conversations about media literacy education, involving government, education, local school districts and State wide organisations. However, it also recognises that changes are necessary so that it and other agencies can expand to help in the support of new educational programs, resources, and media literacy education efforts.

On the latter, it was stated:

NAMLE continues to focus on its vision to help individuals of all ages develop the habits of inquiry and skills of expression they need to be critical thinkers, effective communicators, and active citizens in today’s world. NAMLE’s cause is imperative, the time is ripe for advancing it, and NAMLE is poised to move forward with energy and motivation.⁴⁹

Moreover, NAMLE personnel partnered with personnel associated with *Common Sense Action*, *Media Literacy Now*, the leading national advocacy organisation for media literacy education policy,⁵⁰ and with those from the Digital Citizenship Institute, which details the following role that schools can play in developing media literacy:

Schools can play a critical role by educating, empowering, and engaging children with the best practices around consuming and producing media. While media and technology have great promise for learning, young people need support and education to learn how to make sound judgments when navigating the digital world.⁵¹

In addition, NAMLE officers have written a comprehensive legislative position for consideration by policymakers to use as a model for media literacy within their states. In addition, *Media Literacy Now*’s mission is “to spark policy change in every state and at the national level to ensure all K-12 students receive comprehensive media literacy education skills.”⁵²

⁴⁹ National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), *NAMLE’S History*, NAMLE (Accessed 3 December 2023), <https://namle.net/about/history>.

⁵⁰ E. McNeill, *Media Literacy in an elementary classroom: How it can work*, Media Literacy Now (Accessed 25 May 2023), <https://medialiteracynow.org/media-literacy-in-an-elementary-classroom-how-it-can-work>.

⁵¹ (NAMLE), *Legislation*.

⁵² E. McNeill, *Media Literacy in an elementary classroom: How it can work*.

Another US organisation that delivers media literacy is the National Telemedia Council (NTC). This is the oldest media literacy organization in the US and is still thriving. It has also provided much support to media educators there and abroad. Its mission is not only to guide US media literacy but to bring together other nations by “creating a media-wise, literate global society which means seeking a transformative literacy in a changing world of multiple cultures, moving with the constantly evolving ecology of childhood and the mediated environment.”⁵³

At the same time, educators in the US are still working towards a model that requires media education to be taught in all schools. However, with responsibility for the implementation resting only with States individually there is not a homogenous focus. That makes the impact of media literacy initiatives somewhat fragmented and difficult to implement, thus creating significant challenges for these key organisations.

Russia

Australian educators look to Russia for insights too, from time to time, albeit often with a negative disposition. Media education in Russia has been around for a long time in the form of Soviet *Cineclubs*. Those came from a protectionist perspective, and consisted of a series of efforts by the government to regulate the conditions and effects of film viewing.⁵⁴ In the 1920s, they emerged to screen films that were difficult to find. They were later developed to serve the purpose of entertainment, propaganda, research and education, and to expand the people’s taste in relation to different types of films produced in the region. All of the Cineclubs too had a mixture of films for entertainment and films for communist propaganda purposes.

Cineclubs all but died out between 1935 and the 1950s. They then re-emerged during the ‘Khrushchev Thaw’⁵⁵, “a period from the mid-1950s to the early 60s, when political

⁵³ M. Rowe, A fresh look at the media literacy movement: the National Telemedia Council as an agent for a better future, *Journal of Media Literacy*. vol. 64, no. 1&2, (2017) p. 36.

⁵⁴ L. Jacobs, Reformers and spectators: the film education movement in the thirties, vol. 8, no 1 (22), *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies*. pp. 28-49.

⁵⁵ [when Khrushchev denounced Stalin].

repression and censorship were partially reversed and the communist regime softened.”⁵⁶ That was when Oleg Baranov, a teacher in a school in Tver, Kalinin, established a film education movement. Cineclubs now came to reinforce the political function of education, as they were “increasingly seen as a place of aesthetic appreciation and for teaching morals to Soviet youth”. Parallels can be drawn here to other programs undertaken under communist regimes, including China, that promote morals through schooling.⁵⁷ During the 1950s Baranov was a notable figure in Russian media education. He expanded the notion of the Cineclub to make it an educational experience for students in his school. He was the author of one of the most successful film education models in the nation and he was progressive in his pedagogical approach and in his model for teaching about film. The latter, however, was based on an ideology similar to that which was common in Europe at the time, namely, one involving a discrimination between film aesthetic (a valuable text to study) versus ‘mindless entertainment’ (primarily a judgment of the newly introduced television into the public sphere). Baranov’s approach to film education was comprehensive and progressive in many ways. He also expected his students to run all aspects of the theatre in order to get a full appreciation of the workings of a cinema. That extra-curricular project created a strong sense of collegiality amongst students. Also, the class curriculum complemented it through offering ‘cinema electives’. Those included such activities such as studying the history of the cinema, cinema language, and biographies of famous cinema personalities. Sometimes participants also practiced media production.⁵⁸ Those who did made documentary films about their lives, the Cineclubs and the school. Baranov believed that through that process students could gain a solid appreciation of the masterpieces that they watched in the Cineclubs.⁵⁹ That model of

⁵⁶ A. Fedorov, A. Chekhov, and E. Friesem, Soviet Cineclubs: Baranov's film/media education model, vol. 7, no. 2, *Journal of Media Literacy Education*. p. 15.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

media education, called the Kalinin/Tver model, is famous amongst Russian film and media educators. To encourage students' independence, Baranov used a peer-to-peer approach, where they were required to 'give back' to their community by presenting lectures to younger students and organising film festivals and other activities aimed at creating a passion amongst them for film appreciation. Also, one of his most famous projects to foster his students' appreciation of film and their independence was to get them to create their own film museums. Accordingly, that constituted an early model of the notion of agency and citizenship. Overall then, whilst his ideologies do not suit the practices of a modern-day media education, namely, using film to shape the morals of students and subscribing to the notion that one media form is superior to another, there is still a lot to learn from his model, including on his pedagogy and on the way that he brought film alive for his students.⁶⁰

Germany

In the early decades of the twentieth century, media education in Germany was also based primarily on the premise that children and adolescents needed to be protected from the possible dangers of 'valueless' mass media. Therefore, it was held, they should be made familiar with more worthy or valuable products.⁶¹ Then, during the 1960s, German media literacy followed the same pathway as the US in its change of focus over the course of the decade.⁶² In the early years, an 'aesthetic culture-orientated concept' emerged that was related to the notion of teaching students media texts that were considered to be artistic and valuable. By the mid-1960s, though, a 'functional system-orientated concept' was generated in which a focus on schools offering a range of media to study in order to help students to understand its conventions, messages, production processes, and how it is received by an audience, as well as

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ G. Tulodziecki and S. Grafe, Approaches to learning with media and media literacy education- trends and current situation in Germany, *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2012). pp. 44-60.

⁶² K. Tyner, *The Media Education Elephant*, Center for Media Literacy (1991), <https://www.medialit.org/reading-room/media-education-elephant>.

its relevance as a form of communication, were promoted. The main objectives were to instil in students the responsible use of media to promote democracy, education, and the economy. By the end of the 1960s, those involved in media literacy education in Germany experienced another shift in guiding ideas. At that time, a ‘critical-materialist approach’ was adopted to teach students to analyse the media around them, including in relation to its ideological and social context. In addition, they were required to make their own media products for their own interests and needs⁶³.

By the 1970s internationally, a shift in focus away from the effects of the media to how the media is used had taken place. As young people used media they read the messages they received in relation to the background to their own knowledge, their attitudes, and their social context. Similarly, in the production of media, it was held, because others would read the text using the same principles, a shift to an ‘action-orientated concept’ was needed. That position is still a predominant German discourse on media theory.⁶⁴ It is also reflected in the ‘Core Principles of Media Literacy Education’ in the US, as described by NAMLE, where it is stated that the development of “informed, reflective, and engaged participants is essential for a democratic society.”⁶⁵

Currently, the content of media literacy education is an important part of the curriculum and standards for different academic subjects and areas of learning in Germany. On that, what is offered is similar to that driven by the Canadian media literacy delivery model. Many German states have also developed their own concepts of media literacy education in schools. Nevertheless, despite promising developments, the analysis of relevant documents shows a very heterogeneous picture across the different states of the Federation.

⁶³ D. Kellner and J. Share, Toward critical media literacy: core concepts, debates, organizations, and policy, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, vol. 26, no. 3 (2006). pp. 369-386.

⁶⁴ Tulodziecki and Grafe, Approaches to learning with media and media literacy education- trends and current situation in Germany.

⁶⁵ (NAMLE), *Core Principles of Media Literacy Education in the United States*.

Rapid developments in the field of computers and the internet, and in the use of computer-based media in educational institutions, however, has been considered thoughtfully by German educational policy makers since the 1990s. That contrasts with the case in other nations' media where program creators struggle for priority and resources. Furthermore, because of the movement of the Germany policymakers' approach to media education from early notions of protection to its modern-day function of agency, they are well poised to manage challenges presented by emerging digital media as it develops its media education curriculum.

China

Australian educators look to China for insights too, from time to time, again, albeit often with a negative disposition. As with other communist education systems, media literacy in China has for long been limited by a regime that does not encourage free speech or autonomy. However, some developments in media literacy have been advanced, particularly in primary schools, in recent years. An example of this is a media literacy course designed specifically for primary and middle school students that was launched in 2008 and which involved a number of teams led by leading researchers working to implement them.⁶⁶ Arising from that initiative, a team led by Professor Yan Huan from China's Northwest University created the *Pupil Media Literacy Education Textbook* in 2008. In May 2010, The Guangdong Zhongshan Education Bureau then issued a 'Notification of Implementing Special Training of Media Literacy Teachers of Middle and Primary Schools' and established the first teacher preparation base in the nation for media literacy education teachers.⁶⁷ Moreover, in June 2014, individuals at the Jinniu District Education Bureau of Sichuan Province worked on a pilot project called 'Media

⁶⁶ L. Yongwu, *Media Literacy Moral Education Course in Primary Schools* (Beijing, China: China Broadcast, Film and TV Press, 2017).

⁶⁷ C. K. Cheung and Y. Wu, Media literacy in China, in R. Hobbs et al. (eds.) *The International Encyclopedia of Media Literacy*, (Hoboken, US: John Wiley & Sons Inc. 2019). p. 892.

Literacy Education Research and Practice Based on the Internet Context of Primary and Secondary Students'.⁶⁸

Teachers at selected primary, secondary and high schools trialled the project. Students were allowed to critique the media around them. The teachers subsequently later published a textbook for use in schools. It was called *Middle School Students' Media Literacy*.⁶⁹ Later, in 2014, the Guangzhou Education Bureau of Guangdong Province held one of the first media literacy education field conferences in the nation. It was organised by Professor Zhang Haibo from Guangzhou Youth Palace. Following it, he too edited a new primary school student book. It was entitled *Media Literacy*.⁷⁰

The Chinese State controls and monitors media activity in the country very closely but nevertheless, Chinese media literacy as a subject area celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2017. By then, while the government had no stated objection to the development of media education in schools, it provided no direct government funding and attached no political priority to its development. Rather, media education was dependent on the efforts of passionate media educators within the regions.⁷¹ Outside of schools, the situation in China is a little different. For example, the authorities at the Guangzhou Children's Palace Media Education Project offers one of the biggest and most sustainable media literacy programs in China. They receive government funding to engage students in extra-curricular activities, including sports, music, games and cultural activities⁷² and Haibo, and his team have run a media education program at

⁶⁸ H. Zhang, *Digital Literacy and Growth of Children in Urban China in the New Middle Age*. *Apple Generation: Research on the Digital Life and Media Literacy of 'Millennial'*, MILUNESCO (2013) <https://milunesco.unaoc.org/wp-content/uploads/Final-version-Digital-Literacyand-Growth-of-Children-in-Urban-China-in-the-New-Media-Age.pdf>.

⁶⁹ A. Huang, *Middle School Students' Media Literacy* (Beijing, China: China Broadcast, Film & TV Press, 2017).

⁷⁰ H. Zhang, *Media Literacy: Elementary School students* (Guangzhou, China: Southern Daily Press, 2016).

⁷¹ Y. L. Lee, Promoting media literacy in China: the agency effort, *Journal of Media Literacy*. vol. 64, no. 1&2 (2017), pp, 70-73.

⁷² *Ibid.*

the Palace since 2006 as an ‘extra-curricular’ activity. The Guangzhou City Children’s Palace Media Literacy Education Centre was also established by 2017. Educators associated with the centre had published eleven books on media literacy, including textbooks for use in the classroom and resources for teachers and parents⁷³ and the team members were instrumental in the development of eighteen Children’s Palaces in different cities across China. Moreover, further promotion successfully endorsed children’s media literacy education to become part of a national program with extracurricular characteristics. Soon, media studies had developed in 13 schools in the Guangzhou region, modelled by Haibo’s initiatives.

At the same time, research and the social practice of media literacy in China have aroused the concern of the government and the mainstream media in the past ten years. Thus while the development and implementation of media literacy education in China has made a promising start, there are obvious significant political challenges to its growth and sustainability.

A Brief Overview of the Situation in Australia

In the post-World War II years, Australian secondary schools and tertiary level education institutions grew in harmony with international trends.⁷⁴ A combination of a large increase in enrolments caused by a rise in the minimum school leaving age, increased birth rate, increased migration, and positive economic conditions, encouraged parents to keep their children at school. During the 1940s too, each State legislated to raise the minimum school leaving age to 15 years. Actual implementation, however, was postponed in most of them until the 1960s, by which time it was often irrelevant as many students were remaining at school of their own volition.⁷⁵

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ P. W. Musgrave, *Society and the Curriculum in Australia*, vol. 2 (Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1979).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

Teachers at that time were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with existing curricula, considering them to be based on a notion of ‘one size fits all’. The pedagogical approach adopted for a growing number of diverse students remaining at school beyond the compulsory leaving age was also being deemed archaic. The background is that up until the 1960s, curricula in Australian schools were tightly controlled, very traditional, externally examined and defined by a strict hierarchy of disciplines. The increase in retention rates, however, led to a questioning both of their relevance and of associated teaching methods. Dissatisfaction was with both the content of the curriculum and an individualistic desk bound, pen and paper approach to learning that the public education system endorsed. As in other parts of the world too, Australian teachers began to search for new ways to make the curriculum and learning methods more relevant not only to the ‘new type’ of secondary level student (intending to follow a vocational pathway) but to all students moving towards the 21st century.⁷⁶

The Whitlam Labor government elected in December 1972 had a mandate to substantially increase the level of Commonwealth funds for education, and in the years until 1975, monies allocated to schools trebled.⁷⁷ The Government also established the Australian Schools Commission, giving it major resources and a brief to devolve control for curriculum development and innovation to the local school level. Relatedly, wherever possible, priority in the allocation of funds was given to projects originating in schools. In response to the funding change, media-interested teachers were able to gain access to funds for physical resources and teacher professional development. In Western Australia, a program of extended, live-in, fully funded professional development film studies’ workshops was established, and it ran for eight years. The participating teachers, the vast majority of whom were teachers of English, consequently became media specialists in their schools. To get the subject established in their

⁷⁶ R. Quin, *Media Education in Western Australia*.

⁷⁷ P. Strangio, Instability, in A. Bashford and S. Macintyre (eds.) *The Cambridge History of Australia: The Commonwealth of Australia* (New York, US: Cambridge University Press, 2013). pp. 135-161.

institutions they were able to gain access to further funds through the Schools Commission's Innovation program. That program also allowed teachers to experiment with a new subject of knowledge within their classrooms. It became very popular with those students who lacked interest in the traditional subjects being taught and the pedagogical style used to deliver them.

Following the success of film studies within the subject of English and other subjects in the mid-1960s, Barrie McMahon, a teacher of English, wrote and piloted media studies as a discrete subject at North Lake Senior High School in Perth's northern suburbs. As a result, Western Australia was the first of the Australian states to introduce media studies into secondary schools. Subsequently his initiative provided much of the ideas drawn upon by the education authorities in other States.⁷⁸ For the next thirty-five years, the authorities in the Australian States and Territories continued to have autonomy over the curriculum prescribed for its constituents. At the same time, a desire to introduce a nationwide curriculum had been on the political agenda for several decades.

In September 2015, Australian education ministers endorsed the Australian Curriculum. That was designed to provide "teachers, parents, students and the community with a clear understanding of what students should learn regardless of where they live(d) or what school they attend(ed)." ⁷⁹ It was introduced to improve the quality, equity and transparency of Australia's education system. Relatedly, for some subjects, including media studies, the delivery of Year 11 and 12 media studies is still the responsibility of the States in terms of curriculum design, delivery and moderation in 2024.

On the latter, media studies, entitled, 'Media Arts' in the Australian Curriculum, was written for students in the pre-primary years to the Year 10 cohort nationally. It falls into the

⁷⁸ R. Quin and R. Quin, Media education: the development of media education in Western Australian schools, *Studies in Western Australian History*, vol. 15, (Perth, Western Australia: University of Western Australia, 1994), pp. 110-118.

⁷⁹ Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), *About Us*, ACARA (Accessed 29 December 2023), <https://www.acara.edu.au/about-us>.

broad curriculum learning area of ‘the arts’. That consists of discrete subjects that include ‘visual art’, ‘music’, ‘drama’, ‘dance’ and ‘media arts’. The Federal Government mandated that it be implemented by all Australian schools, but the choice as to which arts subjects are to be taught from the suite of those outlined is decided upon by the authorities in individual schools within each State and Territory. The national curriculum in primary schools is taught by generalist primary school teachers⁸⁰ and it is assumed that all five arts subjects will be taught during primary schooling in Australia, but this is not mandated. Moreover, the decision as to which arts subjects will get chosen by each school is determined within State jurisdictions and in some cases even at the local school level. Consequently, ‘media arts’, the newest and the most expensive subject to be established and maintained as it requires the use of cameras and video editing equipment, often does not get chosen. Another reason for this is that schools overwhelmingly favour longer-established arts subjects as they usually have the necessary physical infrastructure in place already to cater for them. On that, primary schools in Australia have historically taught art and music in their schools.⁸¹

For secondary schools, the Australian Curriculum media subjects for those in Years 7-10 have been written on the assumption that they will be taught by specialist secondary school teachers. Previously, since the 1970s, a mixture of different types of media studies was offered in different States. It has been ensured since the mid-2010s, however, that the Australian Curriculum, in mandating that all States implement the same curriculum- or one aligned with its core principles, that there is consistency across the nation in relation to all related subjects taught.⁸² In the State of Western Australia a version that aligns with the Australian Curriculum

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA), *The Arts* (Perth, Western Australia: SCSA, 2023).

⁸² (ACARA), *About Us*.

has been specifically ‘adapted and adopted’ somewhat specifically to the education needs of the students in Western Australia.⁸³

For students in Year 11 and 12 (upper secondary school) in Australian States and Territories, there is a variety of non-tertiary and tertiary entrance media studies courses offerings. The research reported in this thesis focusses on the Year 12 tertiary entrance option in Western Australia. The equivalent tertiary entrance subject options for media studies in other States are as follows: Victoria – *Media*;⁸⁴ South Australia and Northern Territory - *Media Studies Stage 2*;⁸⁵ Queensland - *Film Television and New Media*;⁸⁶ and Tasmania - *Media Production 3*.⁸⁷ Further, New South Wales has a school-assessed media course with the results contributing, if desired, to a student’s overall high school certificate (HSC). There is not, however, a tertiary entrance media course in the State that can be used to contribute to a student’s overall ATAR score.⁸⁸

Conclusion

Historically, media has been the subject of fear and criticism. This has been so with the introduction of every new form of communication, as society fears the effect of its intrusion and influence, especially on young people. Fear too has driven much of the development of media studies in the Western world. Moreover, anxiety has returned as society grapples with

⁸³ School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA), *What will my child learn?*

⁸⁴ Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), *Media*, VCAA (2023), <https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Media/Pages/Index.aspx>.

⁸⁵ South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE), *Media Studies*, SACE (2023), <https://www.sace.sa.edu.au/web/media-studies/overview>.

⁸⁶ Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA), *Film, Television and New Media General Senior Syllabus 2019: Overview*, QCAA (2016), <https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/senior-subjects/the-arts/film-television-new-media>.

⁸⁷ Children and Young People Department for Education, *Year 11 and 12 Course Guide* Tasmanian Department of Education, Children and Young People (2023), [https://www.decyp.tas.gov.au/year-11-12-course-guide/find-a-course/?search=media production 3](https://www.decyp.tas.gov.au/year-11-12-course-guide/find-a-course/?search=media%20production%203).

⁸⁸ New South Wales Government Education Standards Authority, *School Based Assessment in New South Wales* New South Wales Government Education Standards Authority (2023), <https://arc.nesa.nsw.edu.au/>.

the speed and unprecedented capacity for new media to transmit messages. This chapter provided an overview of the background to the current state of media education in schools internationally. On that, ‘media literacy’ is a term commonly used to describe the learning outcome of media education or media studies in schools, universities and community-based programs. Traditionally it has been conceived as a process or set of skills based on critical thinking and it has a long history of being viewed as being positioned between the aim of providing protection for students and of facilitating their participation in communication.

Teaching about media sometimes takes place across the curriculum. More commonly, though, it is taught as a discrete subject of knowledge in schools, and is usually titled ‘media studies’ or, more broadly, ‘media education’. As a result, these terms along with ‘media literacy’, were used interchangeably in this chapter, thus reflecting a common practice in the academic literature. Overall, too, the focus was largely on media education in the secondary school sector since that is the area of major interest in this thesis.

The exposition that followed was in four sections. First, pedagogical challenges that have been highlighted by scholars in the field were detailed. Secondly, general international trends were outlined. Thirdly, a range of associated developments in a number of countries were considered. Finally, a brief overview of the situation in Australia was presented.

The following chapters examine more specifically the situation within the particular context of the State of Western Australia. In particular, they are presented in relation to four phases. The 1960s and 1970s, entitled *The Early Years*; The 1980s and 1990s, entitled *A Pedagogical Shift*; 2000-2014, entitled *An Unceremonious Rebirth*; and then 2015 to 2024, entitled *The Current Day Syllabus*. Regarding each of these phases, the study provides a detailed analysis of the nuances, variations and in certain instances deviations from general assumptions underpinning what was prescribed. Relatedly, the political education policies and reforms that shaped developments, as well as the political climate that shaped content structure

and the curriculum delivered in the classroom, are discussed. Whilst media studies is a subject from those in the pre-primary to Year 12 cohort in 2024, this thesis primarily focuses on the developments in upper school media studies, and especially on those for students in Year 12.

CHAPTER 4

THE 1960s AND 1970s: THE EARLY YEARS

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the history of media studies in secondary schools during the 1960s to the 1970s, with particular reference to Western Australia. First, the broad historical context of national developments in Australia at the time is presented. Secondly, general developments in relation to schooling and curriculum internationally, in Australia, and in the State of Western Australia, are detailed. Thirdly, general developments in media education are discussed. Specific attention is then paid to media education for secondary schools in WA during the period.

The Broad Historical Context

In the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, the notion of the teenager came to prominence and was represented in the mass media in many countries.¹ As with moral panic, it resulted in social anxiety and concern about the generation located 'in between' childhood and adulthood. The lifestyles of Western youths too began to change with the advent of economic prosperity and the creation of a need for additional government support for secondary and tertiary level education. Such Hollywood rebels as James Dean in the highly popular movie, *Rebel without a Cause* (1955), who glorified the broody, risky, rebel challenging authority after falling into the 'wrong' peer group, fed into society's fear of, and concern for, the rebellious teenager. Subsequently, a significant increase in related sociological and psychological studies of youth took place.²

¹ A. Barcan, *Comprehensive secondary schools in Australia: a view from Newcastle, New South Wales, Education Research and Perspectives*, vol. 34, no. 1 (2007). pp. 108-139.

² C. Campbell and H. Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2014).

Additionally, in the early 1960s, Australia started to experience a substantial and rapid change that continued over the next two decades.³ A concern of those associated with institutions of education was with developing intelligence, creating knowledge, cultivating values, and fostering various human relationships. A consideration of the nexus of these elements paints a picture of the complexity of the time-period and how they influenced the development of education in the nation.⁴ Overall, too, the political, economic, and social situation nationally influenced the nature of education in all constituencies during the period.

The 1960s was also a relatively wealthy time economically in Australia, albeit allowing for some major areas in which there were serious disadvantages and poverty. For the most part, there was an increase in capital, in full employment, in trade expansion, and in rising pastoral and industrial productivity.

A significant increase in immigration from some European countries also took place. Concurrently, the main cities of Australia expanded substantially. In summing up how he saw the situation overall, Allen Fairhall, the Federal Minister for Supply in the Menzies Government, stated, in 1965, that Australia was the most conservative, honest, comfortable and happy nation in the world.⁵

Those in the working class in Australia were staunch supporters of the trade union movement and the Australian Labor Party.⁶ Most were engaged in manual labour and formed fifty per cent of the working population. One-fifth were skilled workers, while four-fifths were unskilled and included a large constituency of immigrants, many of whom spoke English as a second language.

³ W. F. Connell, *Reshaping Australian Education 1960-1985* (Hawthorn, Victoria, The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd. 1993).

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 10

⁵ D. Whitelock, *The Great Tradition: a History of Adult Education in Australia* (Queensland, Australia: University of Queensland Press, 1974).

⁶ A. A. Calwell, *Labour's Role in Modern Society* (Melbourne, Australia: Lansdowne, 1963).

Those in the middle classes in Australia at the time consisted of white-collar workers. They constituted a large and powerful body, valuing individual achievement and having aspirations of wealth and property. The rising computer industry and the commerce and banking sectors offered them increasingly widening job opportunities, possibilities of advancement, and a relaxed and an appealing lifestyle. Achievement of those depended partly on “educational performance and partly on social and family background.”⁷

Overall, determination amongst those in the middle-class was more individualistic in nature than was the case amongst those in the working class.⁸ So also was the situation regarding those in what little there was of an upper-class in Australia. They consisted of a small body of highly prosperous individuals characterised by significant property ownership and wealth, and a consciousness of how they could use authority to their benefit.⁹ Many were connected to each other through marriage, were from families who owned industrial, pastoral, and commercial property, were educated in selective private schools and universities overseas, and were socially connected through prestigious sporting clubs. Members also were considered core in the ‘ruling class’ that dominated positions of power in politics, business, and the economy.¹⁰

One of the most significant representations of the values of those who made up the Australian nation during the 1960s and 1970s, regardless of class, was a love of sport. Indeed, sport was the biggest form of mass entertainment across the country¹¹ with professional spectator sports such as Australian Rules Football being extremely popular.¹² The situation

⁷ Connell, *Reshaping Australian Education 1960-1985*. p. 16.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ P. H. Karmel and M. Brunt, *The Structure of the Australian Economy* (Melbourne, Australia: F. W. Cheshire, 1962).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Australian Information Service, (1977) *Advertising and Publicity- Norm Cartoon Character in Life Be in it Fitness Campaign*, National Archives of Australia, Canberra, Australia, <https://www.naa.gov.au/learn/learning-resources/learning-resource-themes/society-and-culture/sport-and-recreation/life-be-it-fitness-campaign>.

¹² Connell, *Reshaping Australian Education 1960-1985*. p. 19.

started to change, though, in the mid-1970s, when an economic downturn and rising health costs led to a drop in the physical fitness levels of Australians, who were under increasing financial strain. The *Life. Be In It.* advertising campaign¹³ was an example of a government initiative to address the situation.

Another significant influence was television. Concurrently, many picture theatres closed. Moreover, school students now spent more time watching television than they did at school, and adults used television as a source of news. The Vietnam War (1955-1975), dubbed the first ‘media war’, was broadcast into homes almost daily. For Australia, being an anti-communist ally of the US, that became challenging, especially when intensely graphic images were broadcast. Concurrently, technological developments in satellite technology and cameras made editing and distribution simpler and easier than previously. At the same time, mass media in the early 1960s were constrained by conservative censorship laws on literature, art, films, radio and TV by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), which had monopoly control. In 1963, for example, the Federal Minister responsible for TV and radio broadcasting used his censorship powers for political purposes to delay the airing of a documentary criticising Western involvement in the Vietnam War.¹⁴

American popular culture was also broadcast into Australian homes. That happened while discussion was taking place not just nationally but throughout the Western world about how to cater for the ‘new’ cohort of students in schools that resulted from a dramatic increase in the number of secondary school student enrolments.¹⁵ Additionally, the ‘white Australia policy’ Commonwealth Immigration Restriction Act (1901) was modified and a consistent flow of immigrants from Asian and Pacific countries followed. That was connected to new

¹³ Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation, *Life. Be in it. Games Manual* (Victoria, Australia: Ashton Scholastic, 1980).

¹⁴ A. L. McLeod, *The Pattern of Australian Culture* (New York, US: Cornell University Press, 1963).

¹⁵ Barcan, *Comprehensive secondary schools in Australia: a view from Newcastle, New South Wales*, 34 (1).

political and business partnerships in the Pacific region, which saw Japan replace Britain as the nation's main trading partner.¹⁶

By 1975, however, after a decade of relative prosperity, Australian politics was in turmoil. That situation ended with the controversial dismissal of the Whitlam Federal Labor government.¹⁷ From then until 1991, there was only one change of Federal government when a coalition of conservative parties led by Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser (1975-1983) was succeeded by a Labor government under Prime Minister Robert Hawke (1983-1991).¹⁸ Australian society was changing. Society was becoming more educated and sophisticated. However, there was also an underlying sober atmosphere, reflecting people's responses to economic insecurity brought on by rising unemployment and economic recession. The Government's response was to impose control on the public purse and place restraint on wage increases. A result was that by the late 1970s, following strict government measures, inflation was down, unemployment levels had stabilised, and government spending was reduced.¹⁹

General Developments in Schooling and Curriculum Internationally, in Australia and in the State of Western Australia

In the UK, following WWII, there was an appetite for 'secondary school education for all.' That seemed to be a necessary compensation for the sufferings of wartime. Policymakers in Britain considered too that local comprehensive high schools, the first four of which opened in London in 1946, provided a way to deliver the goal. Other education reforms introduced included child centred education and social studies.

Almost 40 years later, though, in England and Wales, the newly elected Thatcher Government abolished the 1976 Act of the previous Labor Government that had required local

¹⁶ Connell, *Reshaping Australian Education 1960-1985*.

¹⁷ S. Macintyre, *The Concise History of Australia* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020). p. 242.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Strangio, *Instability*. p. 151.

education authorities to submit plans for introducing local comprehensive schools. Its members supported the re-emergence of selection and differentiation in secondary school education and placed an emphasis on vocational education and training for the majority of pupils. Similarly in the United States during the presidency of Ronald Reagan, a report, *A Nation at Risk*, that was highly critical of the nation's high schools was published by the US's National Commission on Excellence in Education.

Australia was not immune to the trends detailed above.²⁰ At the end of the post-War economic boom years of the 1950s and 1960s there was increasing pressure on government provision of education.²¹ In fact, during the 1960s, the budgets for education in all States increased to reach 25 per cent of total expenditure. Additionally, an extra year of high school was introduced.²² The rationale behind that and a raising of the school leaving age was based on the needs of the economy, the assumption being that economic growth would be the end-result of a knowledge-based economy. Those promoting education reform now set out to shape schools to educate future workers with skills for the workplace, including through vocational training and other measures connected to employer needs.²³

Relatedly, in 1970, the Australian Council of Education Research published a review of the nation's education system titled 'The Secondary School at Sixes and Sevens'.²⁴ Recommendations made for secondary school education included expanding the curriculum offerings in schools. At that stage too, the authorities in most Australian States were in the process of transforming their various secondary schools into comprehensive schools. A

²⁰ C. Campbell and G. Sherington, *The Comprehensive Public High School: Historical Perspectives*, (New York, US: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). p. 93.

²¹ A. MacKinnon and H. Proctor, Education, in *The Cambridge History of Australia: The Commonwealth of Australia* (New York, US: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

²² Campbell and Sherington, *The Comprehensive Public High School: Historical Perspectives*.

²³ C. Ryan and L. Watson, *Skills at Work: Lifelong Learning and Changes in the Labour Market* (Canberra, Australia, Department of Education, 2003).

²⁴ R. T. Fitzgerald and Australian Council for Educational Research, *The Secondary School at Sixes and Sevens : A Review of the Sixties and Prospect of the Seventies* (Victoria, Australia: Australian Council for Educational Research, 1970).

widening of the scope of the curriculum to meet the needs of school leavers and the workplace followed.²⁵

When Gough Whitlam's Labor Party was elected in 1972, education was, for the first time, high on the Federal Government's political agenda. The Australian Schools Commission (ASC), which initiated an increase in public expenditure on education from 4 per cent of GDP in 1970-1971 to 6.1 per cent by 1977-1978, was established.²⁶ Moreover, the authors of the Karmel Report of 1973, recommended the allocation of per capita grants to all schools on the basis of education need.²⁷ In addition, while the Australian State authorities continued to administer school systems, Federal Government economic and education policy was aimed at boosting the social democratic status and goals of comprehensive public education. In the decade that followed, however, it also undermined them.²⁸

The Disadvantaged Schools Program (DSP) initiated by the ASC on the recommendation of the members of the Karmel Committee was one of the most significant education initiatives of the Whitlam government of 1972-1975. It was described later as the most extensive and experienced antipoverty program in education undertaken anywhere in the world, having funded 150,000 projects between 1974 and 1985. It was a program too that was focussed primarily on teacher involvement in curriculum projects,²⁹ and on supporting new, often school-based, curriculum development initiatives, and work with local communities.³⁰

The oil crisis following the Arab-Israel conflict of 1973, brought an end to the long economic boom that had persisted in Western economies since WWII. That had a significant impact on school leavers in various nations, including Australia, with a 'lost generation' of

²⁵ Campbell and Sherington, *The Comprehensive Public High School: Historical Perspectives*.

²⁶ MacKinnon and Proctor, Education, p. 444.

²⁷ Australian Schools Commission, *Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission (Karmel Report)* (Canberra, Australia: Australian Schools Commission, 1973).

²⁸ Campbell and Sherington, *The Comprehensive Public High School: Historical Perspectives*.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

young people leaving school and being unable to find work. By the mid-1970s, over one-sixth of young Australians aged 15-19 were unemployed. New challenges also followed for the school system in relation to meeting the needs of an increasing student population, with many deemed to be of less academic ability than those in the academic selective cohort of the decade before. Also, the demographic profile of secondary school students had changed such that approximately 40 per cent of Australians were now immigrants or the children of immigrants.³¹

One response was the enactment of the recommendations detailed in the Kangan Report of 1974³² that led to the establishment of a new education pathway option titled ‘technical and further education’ (TAFE). That, in turn, led to the growth of a distinct education sector attracting Commonwealth funding to provide for the increasing number of students remaining in higher secondary schooling who did not intend to go to university.³³ Priority in allocation was given to projects originating in schools for those who would continue on to TAFE. Also, a change came in the perspective of seeing TAFE as only serving the manpower needs of industry changed to a broader one of seeing its wider purpose as existing to meet the needs of individuals.³⁴ An improvement in the skills of the workforce facilitated by a framework of ‘key competencies’ as recommended in a series of reports and a discussion paper was sought.³⁵ Private providers of vocational education also emerged in the education sphere. Their view of students was that they were customers and they capitalised financially on opportunities presented to them.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Australian Committee on Technical and Further Education and M. Kangan, *TAFE in Australia: Report on Needs in Technical and Further Education, April, 1974*, Australian Committee on Technical and Further Education (1975), <http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/17052>.

³³ National Centre for Vocational Education Research and G. Goozee, *The Development of TAFE in Australia*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research (2001), <http://www.ncver.edu.au/research/proj2/mk0003.pdf>.

³⁴ K. E. Beazley, The Commonwealth Ministry of Education: an experience in the Whitlam Government 1972–75, *Melbourne Studies in Education*, vol. 22, no. 1, (Melbourne, Australia: Routledge, 1980), pp. 1-60.

³⁵ E. Mayer and Mayer Committee, *Putting General Education to Work : the Key Competencies Report* Australian Education Council (1992), <http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/72980>. p. 5.

As in a number of other Western nations, over the earlier decade there was a rapid increase in the secondary school population in Western Australia, with enrolments between 1952 and 1961 doubling.³⁶ That led the Minister of Education, the Hon. A F. Watts to form a committee in 1961 based on the recommendation of Dr. Robertson, the Director-General of Education, with the primary purpose of which was to propose recommendations for the future of the sector. It was held that the curriculum, which had been in place for 50 years, was no longer sufficient to meet the needs of students.³⁷ Five years later, in 1966, Dr. David Mossensen assumed the position of Director for Secondary Education within the State's Education Department and Chairman of the Achievement Certificate Council. Members of the latter were given the task of overseeing the introduction of a new qualification, intended to replace the existing Junior Certificate Examinations, that were titled, 'Certificate of Education' courses.³⁸ Concurrently, new teaching approaches, including group work, inquiry-oriented instruction, and collaborative teaching were gradually adopted in schools.³⁹

By 1969, with the increase in the school leaving age from 14 to 15, the retention rate for students up to 15 years of age rose significantly from 75 to 90 percent. Relatedly, a committee inquiry into secondary school education produced what was titled the Dettman Report.⁴⁰ Its members concluded that the Western Australian education system prioritised written skills over speaking skills and emphasised memorisation and factual knowledge at the expense of comprehension.⁴¹ Their recommendations included the development of new

³⁶ Quin, *Media Education in Western Australia*.

³⁷ W.D. Neal, *The Secondary School Curriculum: A Review of Developments in Western Australia, 1958-64, with Proposals for the Future* (Perth, Western Australia, Education Department, 1964).

³⁸ D Smart and A.C. Alderson, *The Politics of Education in Western Australia: An Exploratory Study of State Education Department Policy Making*, (Melbourne, Australia: Centre for the Study of Higher Education University of Melbourne, 1980).

³⁹ Education Department of Western Australia (EDWA), *Secondary Education in Western Australia: Report of the Committee on Secondary Education appointed by the Minister for Education under the chairmanship of Mr H. W. Dettman* (Perth, Western Australia: EDWA, 1969).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

subjects specifically targeting students labelled as ‘less able.’ Additionally, they suggested granting schools the freedom to create and implement their own syllabi, tailored to meet the particular needs of their students. Then, in 1970, a new Board of Secondary Education delegated curriculum matters to schools, enabling them to propose and seek approval for new subjects not previously offered by the Education Department. Among these was media studies, driven by the dedication and passion of a group of teachers of English.⁴²

General Developments in Media Education

The broad international background to media studies taught in the English classroom can be traced to F. R. Leavis, a Cambridge scholar and early pioneer in media studies. His work, *Culture and Environment*,⁴³ published in 1933, served as a guidebook for educators on how to utilize media and analyse persuasive media forms, including advertisements. Then, in 1950 the Society of Film Teachers was established in the United Kingdom. It operated as a voluntary subscription body with the primary objective of promoting film appreciation in schools, higher education institutions, and community clubs. In pursuit of that goal, the Society members launched a publication called *The Film Teacher* journal in 1952. Over time, this work evolved, eventually becoming known as *Screen*, and offered valuable insights and guidance to teachers not only in the United Kingdom but also internationally.⁴⁴ Moreover, in 1964, as societies worldwide experienced widespread social uprisings and a heightened awareness of the consequences of government actions and societal responses, and as television established a common presence in households, UNESCO took a notable step in highlighting the concept of

⁴² Quin, *Media Education in Western Australia*; Board of Secondary Education, *First Annual Report, 1970-1976* (Perth, Western Australia: Board of Secondary Education, 1977), p. 8; Education Department of Western Australia (EDWA), *Review of educational standards in Lower-Secondary Schools in Western Australia: Report of the panel appointed by the Minister of Education in Western Australia, under the chairmanship of Professor T. A. Priest* (Perth, Western Australia: EDWA, 1981).

⁴³ F. R. Leavis, *Culture and Environment* (London, UK: Chatto & Windus, 1933).

⁴⁴ J. Caughie, et al. *Screen: History*, University of Glasgow (Accessed 3 March 2022), <https://www.gla.ac.uk/research/az/screen/history>; C. Bazalgette, E. Bevort, and J. Savino (eds.), *New Directions: Media Education Worldwide* (London, UK: British Film Institute, 1992).

media education. Since then, its support for media education has been instrumental in bringing together experts on multiple occasions to address shared concerns and engage in debates regarding their diverse perspectives.⁴⁵

During the 1960s also, Len Masterman, a teacher of English in the UK, started incorporating the study of media in his teaching to engage students who showed little interest in the traditional texts used for the teaching of his subject. Later, after he had moved to the University of Nottingham, he developed the first-ever examination course on television studies for British schools and published it in a widely influential text in 1980, entitled *Teaching About Television*.⁴⁶ It quickly gained popularity, selling out twice within the first six months of its release and ultimately selling 100,000 copies worldwide.⁴⁷

Since the 1970s, a demand for media studies also prompted the London Education Authority to hire media resource officers. These individuals were responsible for promoting innovation in schools, integrating media into the curriculum, and initiating change in the British school system. Many were teachers themselves, collaborating with their peers to create media-based teaching materials.⁴⁸ However, criticism followed, with programs labelled as ‘cafeteria curricula’ due to their teacher-centric basis. While the aim was to address students’ needs and interests, that was being done, it was argued, at the expense of providing a fundamental education in English, mathematics, and the emerging field of computer science.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, at the University of Toronto, Marshall McLuhan had started to formulate his ideas that culminated in a book entitled *Understanding Media*, that was published in 1964. Against the backdrop of the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War, it had resonance with

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Masterman, *Voices of Media Literacy: International Pioneers Speak: Len Masterman Interview Transcript*.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ C. Bazalgette, *Voices of Media Literacy: International Pioneers Speak: Cary Bazalgette Interview Transcript*, interviewed by D. Morganthaler (2010). <https://www.medialit.org/reading-room/voices-media-literacy-international-pioneers-speak-cary-bazalgette-interview-transcript>.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

educators, scholars, and the public. A hypothesis upon which it was based was that the ‘medium is the message’. On that, he stressed the importance of comprehending and critiquing the medium’s form as much as understanding the message it conveys.⁵⁰ Canada’s Ontario Ministry of Education responded with its *Media Literacy Guide*, designed to “assist students to deal critically with the media and their role in their lives.”⁵¹ The Association for Media Literacy was also established in Canada in 1978, leading to a nationwide review of curricula that mandated the inclusion of media studies from kindergarten to Year 12.⁵²

From the 1960s, educators in the US also started to explore the teaching of film production in the classroom using new portable video recorders. The objective was not only to teach students essential technical skills but also to help them grasp the connections between “symbols, systems, culture, and cognition.”⁵³ Then, relatedly, in the 1970s, media literacy education in the country gained recognition as an essential aspect of citizenship education, which was seen as a means of exercising democratic rights and fulfilling civil responsibilities.⁵⁴

Kennedy highlighted the similarities in reform endeavours across different nations, including the United Kingdom, the USA, and Australia. These countries, he concluded, experienced a crisis of confidence in education itself. Notably, within them the responsibility

⁵⁰ Masterman, *Voices of Media Literacy: International Pioneers Speak: Len Masterman Interview Transcript*.

⁵¹ Ontario Ministry of Education, *Media Literacy Resource Guide: Intermediate and Senior Divisions*. p. 7.

⁵² *Ibid.* pp. 9-10. Masterman, *Voices of Media Literacy: International Pioneers Speak: Len Masterman Interview Transcript*.

⁵³ R. Hobbs and A. Jensen, The past, present, and future of media literacy education, vol. 1, no. 1. *Journal of Media Literacy Education* (2009), p. 1.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 13; K. Kennedy, An analysis of the policy contexts of recent curriculum reform efforts in Australia, Great Britain and the United States, in D. S. G. Carter and M. H. O’Neill (eds.) *International Perspectives on Educational Reform and Policy Implementation* (London, UK: Routledge, 1995). pp. 71-85; P. H. Coombs, *The World Crisis in Education- The View from the Eighties* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1985); N. Johnson, *How to Talk Back to Your Television Set* (Boston, US: Little Brown and Company, 1970).

for curriculum decision-making shifted from professional educators to governments, who now assumed a central role in addressing broader social, political, and economic agendas.⁵⁵

The Subject takes off in Western Australia

According to Goodson's perspective, the dissemination of knowledge within a school subject takes place through formal and informal channels. Those include official syllabus documents, curriculum resources, academic journals, textbooks, and formal and informal teacher networks. Additionally, subject newsletters and the exchange of teaching artifacts, such as programs, lesson notes, and related documents, contribute to the process.⁵⁶

During the 1960s and 1970s these various forces influenced the development of media studies programs that were endorsed by the Board of Secondary Education in Western Australia. The primary purpose of its documents was to offer guidance and clarity to educators by establishing the boundaries of and parameters for the subject. Their emergence, as Robyn Quin explains, was not driven by either popular or academic concerns about the media's behavioural effects, ideological domination, or threat to democracy.⁵⁷ Rather, a major influence was the change in the school cohort due to the raising of the school age that led to demands from teachers for a more relevant and engaging curriculum to cater to the needs of the student population. Influential too was the availability of timely financial support from the Commonwealth Government, which facilitated teachers' professional development and allowed for the incorporation of media education into the curriculum. Additionally, there was a significant re-conception of the purpose and nature of the teaching of English, that created a

⁵⁵ Kennedy, *An analysis of the policy contexts of recent curriculum reform efforts in Australia, Great Britain and the United States*.

⁵⁶ I. F. Goodson, *The Changing Curriculum: Studies in Social Construction* (New York, US: Peter Lang, 1997).

⁵⁷ R. Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?* p. 145.

fertile ground for the inclusion of media studies as part of the broader educational objectives in schools.⁵⁸

Regarding the first major influence noted above, namely, the increase in student retention rates, a questioning of the relevance of the traditional curriculum for English took place.⁵⁹ On that, Barrie McMahon argued that the subject should be based on “a student involvement approach.”⁶⁰ He emphasised too that what he saw as an archaic style of teacher dominated classrooms with passive students sitting at desks was impractical.⁶¹

Media studies soon emerged as a subject that was particularly well-suited to the new student cohort. It offered a practical and creative approach, with a workload that did not overly tax their literacy skills. In line with the critical education orientation, a classroom pedagogy that was student-centred, inquiry-oriented, and action-based was adopted. The teachers and students collaborated extensively in this approach, which promoted a more inclusive and engaging learning environment for these marginalised students. The new subject provided an alternative pathway for these students, allowing them to thrive in a subject area that better aligned with their interests and abilities.⁶² At the same time, it needs to be recognised that the political purpose of introducing media studies was to act as a means of containment, partially removing the less able students from the mainstream academic curriculum.

Regarding subjects taught in schools more broadly, in the US Jerome Bruner (1915-2016) distinguished between two senses of the word ‘relevance’. The first sense is social relevance, which refers to the idea that what is taught should address significant global

⁵⁸ Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?*

⁵⁹ Quin and Quin, *Media education: the development of media education in Western Australian schools.*

⁶⁰ B. McMahon, *Report to the Education Department on Study Abroad* (Unpublished Report, Perth, Western Australia, 1973). p. 3.

⁶¹ (EDWA), *Secondary Education in Western Australia: Report of the Committee on Secondary Education appointed by the Minister for Education under the chairmanship of Mr H. W. Dettman.* p. 104.

⁶² T. Jones, *Understanding Education Policy: The Four Education Orientations' Framework* (Dordrecht, Netherlands, Springer, 2013). p. 40.

challenges that affect the survival of our species. The second sense is personal relevance. This refers to the notion that what is taught should be self-rewarding for students and teachers alike.⁶³ Media studies, as introduced in Western Australia, was designed with both positions in mind. Not surprisingly, it became a popular choice for both students and educators.

The availability of new government funds, combined with a growing discussion about opening up the curriculum, created a willingness amongst teachers to embrace innovative ideas.⁶⁴ With the support of Commonwealth funds allocated through The Schools Commission, projects were undertaken for media studies to be established as a distinct subject in the State.⁶⁵

Barrie McMahon,⁶⁶ the Head of English at Hamilton Senior High School, can be credited as the father of media studies in Western Australia because of his pivotal role in its introduction and development in 1974. In the early stages, what he promoted was designed to offer a 'learning by doing' experience, specifically targeted at non-tertiary bound school leavers. Students engaged in practical film-making activities, followed by discussions on and analysis of their work. On those, McMahon was influenced by media theory and the ideas of Marshall McLuhan. Equally significant was a desire by various teachers to break away from what they perceived as the constraints of the existing education system. That led to an early focus of media studies in Western Australia being primarily on production.⁶⁷

At the same time, there was opposition to the subject in certain quarters when the possibility of it being appropriate for attaining tertiary entrance status was raised. Consequently, advocates had for some time to accept that it was only one of the new Certificate

⁶³ J. Bruner and A. Gil, *The Relevance of Education* (New York, US: WW Norton and Company, 1973). p. 23; N. Postman and C. Weingartner, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (New York, US: Delta, 1971).

⁶⁴ (EDWA), *Secondary Education in Western Australia: Report of the Committee on Secondary Education appointed by the Minister for Education under the chairmanship of Mr H. W. Dettman*.

⁶⁵ Australian Schools Commission, *Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission (Karmel Report)*. p. 10

⁶⁶ Industry recognition, *Little Aidem*, (Perth, Western Australia: Education Department of Western Australia, 1982).

⁶⁷ R. Quin, Media studies: finding an identity, *Media International Australia Incorporating Culture and Policy*, vol. 120, no.1 (2006), pp. 90-105.

of Secondary Education courses specifically designed for students who were not bound for tertiary education. The opposition in question was influenced by dominant perceptions that achievement in the subject focused largely on practical and creative aspects was not appropriate preparation for later study of traditional academic content. That situation illustrates Goodson and Marsh's hypothesis that school subjects are contested social phenomena.⁶⁸

Critics at the time characterised media studies as a 'Mickey Mouse' subject that had limited relevance beyond vocational studies. The latter term was also used later on to demean the value of the course also in later years.⁶⁹ As a result, teachers had to struggle to convince education authorities of the subject matter's value in meeting the needs of all students.⁷⁰ That struggle highlighted how societal attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs can shape the standing and reputation of different subjects within the curriculum.⁷¹

Until the 1970s, the curriculum for English in Western Australia had largely exhibited the characteristics of high-status knowledge. The notion involves an emphasis on written presentation, individualism, abstractness, and a disconnection from daily life and common experiences.⁷² That was what McMahon pushed back against when advocating for the incorporation of practical film making within the English classroom. His position received support when a UK based curriculum entitled 'Growth Model English' had a significant influence on the development of the English curriculum in Western Australia. It broadened the

⁶⁸ I. F. Goodson and C. J. Marsh, *Studying School Subjects: A Guide* (London, UK: Taylor & Francis Ltd. 2005).

⁶⁹ T. Dodd, *Design and Technology and the School Curriculum* (London, UK: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?*

⁷² M. F. D. Young, An approach to the study of curricula as socially organised knowledge, in M. F. D. Young (ed.) *Knowledge and Control: New Directions for the Sociology of Education* (London, UK: Collier-MacMillan, 1971) pp. 19-46.

scope of English by emphasising creative writing, oral communication, and group work, and opening up opportunities for students to explore drama, film and television production.⁷³

The potential for utilising emerging communication technologies also became increasingly evident. The availability of inexpensive technologies, such as *Super 8* filmmaking, and the possibilities of using portable VHS video recorders sparked interest among a few secondary school teachers in Western Australia, who had already started incorporating forms of media studies in their classrooms. These early initiatives demonstrated a growing recognition of the value of media studies and the potential of communication technologies in the educational setting.⁷⁴ One response of McMahon was to arrange after-hours film-making workshops for interested teachers to enhance their practical skills.⁷⁵

In 1971, McMahon went a step further in establishing the Screen Education Society, with a goal of broadening the focus from solely film production to also include film criticism and television studies. This organisation served as the foundation for the subject association that was established and entitled the Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM WA) and began to promote media studies in Western Australian schools amongst various teachers and not just those teaching English.

Over the years, periodicals, such as *Media Message*, *Aidem*, and *Little Media* were published by McMahon and a team of volunteer media teachers. They played a vital role in connecting teachers across the State who were striving to incorporate media studies into their classrooms. The Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM WA) following its establishment in the early 1980s also played a major part in the process.

⁷³ Board of Secondary Education, *Certificate of Secondary Education and the Tertiary Admissions Examination: Manual 1977-1984, English* (Perth, Western Australia: Board of Secondary Education, 1980). pp. 98-99.

⁷⁴ Quin, *Media Education in Western Australia*.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

In 1973 the Education Department of Western Australia funded an in-service program for teachers of English on filmmaking. That was opened by the then Director of Secondary Education, Mr Harry Louden. The main concern was with practical filmmaking.⁷⁶ By now, many schools in Perth had established film societies for students. A teacher writing at the time in support of this development stated: “One of the most interesting and worthwhile extra-curricular activities a teacher can be involved in at all levels of the secondary school is the school Film Society.”⁷⁷ He added as follows, “Films can help broaden a student's sense of the world beyond their immediate horizons; they can sharpen a student's critical sensibilities towards a major 20th century art form and by extension to other art forms; film as film is an important art form that should not be ignored.”⁷⁸

In 1972, McMahon was awarded a fellowship to study in England and to travel with his family for two years to explore media education in Europe, the United States, and Canada. In his proposal, he argued for the need to establish screen education in Western Australia on the basis that “film and television are potentially, if not already, the most important means of communication, entertainment and art form in our society.”⁷⁹ That achievement by a relatively unknown classroom teacher who was interested in film-making was indicative of the shift in discourse in the State around purposes of schooling at the time.⁸⁰ Moreover, his encounter with Marshall McLuhan during a lecture in Toronto during the trip proved to be significant for the later development of media studies curriculum in Western Australia. As a major curriculum writer for the early curricula in the 1970s and 1980s, McMahon incorporated McLuhan’s ideas

⁷⁶ Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?*

⁷⁷ B. McMahon, The school film society, *Media Message- The Magazine for Media Teachers* vol. 2, no. 1 (1976). No page numbers.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ B. McMahon, *Application for Education Department study fellowship* (1971). As quoted in Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?* p. 123.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* p. 123.

into his work. One example is the stress he placed on “a linear concept of communication with an emphasis on the medium.” McLuhan's belief in the profound impact of media on society and culture also resonated with McMahon, which led to him including concepts related to the role of media as influential communication channels.⁸¹

McMahon was influenced also by the work of Lowndes on media control and also of Golay on image analysis. In addition, during his two years of study, he engaged with teachers, administrators, and schools. He was particularly impressed by the level of community access to television and participation in an institution in Grenoble, France. Additionally, the application of Marxist ideological analysis in some Swedish schools left a lasting impression on him. Furthermore, he drew inspiration from *Doing the Media*,⁸² an anthology of media production activities used in the Mamaroneck Project in New York. The emphasis in the latter was on children creating their own media productions.

In 1973, when the committee for the Karmel Report submitted its report, entitled, ‘Schools in Australia’⁸³, a new discourse of education was presented. White described that as the deintellectualisation of community on the basis that it spoke not of human capital but of human talent, relationships, participation and individuality.⁸⁴ Thus, it was accommodating of media studies, which aimed “to promote an understanding of media and an awareness of its impact upon the individual and society,”⁸⁵ whilst at the same time being fun and creative.

⁸¹ Quin and Quin, *Media education: the development of media education in Western Australian schools*. p. 116.

⁸² *Ibid.* p. 115.

⁸³ Australian Schools Commission, *Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission (Karmel Report)*. p. 94; G. S. Becker, *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with Special Reference to Education* (Chicago, US, University of Chicago Press, 2009); S. Marginson, *Re-assessing Karmel: Results of the 1973 Education Settlement* (Canberra, Australia: Australian Teachers Federation, 1983).

⁸⁴ D. White, *Education and the State: A Federal Involvement in Educational Development* (Victoria, Australia: Deakin University, 1987).

⁸⁵ B. McMahon, *Interim Proposal for the North Lake Media Studies Course: Submission to the Western Australian Education Department*, (Perth, Western Australia: Education Department, 1973). p. 1 [as cited in Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?*] p. 128.

Indeed, it was reflective of the emphasis on education as “enjoyable and fruitful in itself” and schools as “a community where both education and people are valued, and where the influences of the marketplace do not dictate the price placed upon individual talents.”⁸⁶

Ideas generated by the report led to the recognition that there was a space in Western Australia for subjects like media studies, which had no vocational relevance at the time and that offered no pathway to university. The indications were that students would now be able to study media just because they enjoyed doing so. In addition, whilst examinations remained part of the education scene nationally, the emphasis on academic rigour was joined to new discourses of social justice, relevance, and emancipation from the ‘old system’.⁸⁷

Returning from overseas into this shifting education landscape, McMahon planned to establish media studies as a new subject in the Western Australian secondary school system. Aware of the hierarchical nature of the Education Department, he recognised the importance of enlisting support from senior bureaucrats for the endeavour. He met with previous teaching colleagues, Bob Biggins, the English language superintendent, Malcolm Bennett, the social studies superintendent, and Gordon Smith, the head of the Department’s Audio-Visual Branch. He then secured meetings with upper bureaucrats including Harry Loudon, Director of Secondary Education, and Dr David Mossenson, Assistant Director General. On their advice, he wrote a comprehensive proposal to establish media studies in Western Australia, to implement it at North Lake Senior High School, and to create a specialist media centre there to provide an advisory service for other schools.⁸⁸

In the application, McMahon proposed a program that would give students of all ages access to the tools of the ‘electronic age’ to provide them with a new means of communication.

⁸⁶ Australian Schools Commission, *Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission (Karmel Report)*. p. 14.

⁸⁷ Quin and Quin, *Media education: the development of media education in Western Australian schools*.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p. 116.

From the use of a ‘hands on’ approach it was expected that an awareness of the importance and potential of the mass media would develop.⁸⁹ By now ‘learning by doing’ was a recurring catch phrase in written and verbal discussions of media studies.

McMahon’s proposal, framed in terms of the dominant discourses of the period, presented itself as a rational response not to public demand for media education, but to the social crisis of the period. Also, it was pointed out, the new subject could be introduced into the curriculum quite easily because of the highly centralised nature of the State education department.⁹⁰ On that, Dr David Mossenson and Harry Loudon and other senior department figures became generous sponsors of the effort.⁹¹

A group of teachers, including Barrie McMahon, Robyn Quin and Warren Daniel then rallied together to write a media education syllabus for Western Australian schools. A film course centred primarily on engaging students and allowing them to ‘learn by doing’ was produced.⁹² McMahon ensured that the work was guided by the media studies position articulated by members of the Birmingham Centre in England. Regarding that, he argued that production could be used as “an aid to learning in the same way that a science teacher uses beakers and test tubes towards a conceptual end.”⁹³

The syllabus for media studies

The syllabus for media studies for Western Australia was written as a program to be taught over two years of schooling. The first section was structured in terms of themes and generalisations. These were statements on theoretical understanding regarding current media

⁸⁹ Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?* pp. 151-152 [Personal Communication between Robyn Quin and Barrie McMahon], September 25, 1973.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Quin and Quin, Media education: the development of media education in Western Australian schools.

⁹² B. McMahon, Course outline for media education, *Metro Media & Education*, no. 32. (1975). pp. 15-17.

⁹³ Quin, Media studies: finding an identity. p. 95

and had strong links to the position of McLuhan and that of Len Masterman at the University of Nottingham in the UK. The goal was for students to study the relationship between medium, objective, and theme, and what was prescribed was designed so that teachers could shape it such that they could accommodate available resources and context. In the course outline it was also assumed that teachers would focus on a particular medium at any one time.⁹⁴

Student study in the field commenced within an experimental piloted project established at North Lake Senior High School in Perth, that was coordinated by McMahon. What was pursued was a series of tasks and activities to be completed using media technology. By 1975, 680 students per week were enrolled, with each attending three consecutive periods.⁹⁵ McMahon later stated that the emphasis was on,

...how to use the skills obtained in order to allow for improved communication, and from this involvement, an understanding of the impact of modern mass media may emerge. The skills obtained in the process are a means to an end rather than an end in themselves. The stated objectives focus on a particular medium, and the relationship of medium, objective and theme is indicated. This approach is used in order to give flexibility to the programme.⁹⁶

Teachers, it was also stated, were meant to be guided by the idea that “the mass media have a dominant influence upon the individual and the society, in terms of both medium and content”, that “it is possible for all levels of society to participate in his society via the tools of the mass media”, that “the modern mass media are capable of providing aesthetic satisfaction”, and that “the modern mass media can provide an input that will assist in achieving educational goals.”⁹⁷

Teachers from different subject specialisations, including English and social studies, who were keen to diversify their teaching skills, or to move towards a new way of teaching, were able to sign up for a fully funded week-long preparation program. They were accommodated at quality hotels and partook in long days of film production. Funding was

⁹⁴ McMahon, Course Outline for Media Education.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 15

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 16.

provided under a scheme funded by the federal government, made available to schools for “improvement in their material position”, as a result of the Interim Committee for the Schools Commission in 1973. To be ‘Mickey Mouse’, to teach in the area without having to use expensive equipment, was celebrated and was publicised through the issuing of Mickey Mouse t-shirts to participants. Mickey Mouse was depicted on the t-shirts operating a video camera.⁹⁸ As discussed earlier, however, that came to be a catch phrase used in later years by those opposing media studies, using the term to devalue the subject’s worth.

Other programs of teacher preparation conducted in the 1970s included evening photography classes:

If you want to join the ‘Life, Be In It’ movement without blood, sweat and tears, then evening class photography is for you! At North Lake Senior High School there is the ideal opportunity for you to learn the skills and all the magic associated with black and white and some colour photography. The essence of the course is a ‘Hands On’ approach to learning... There’s lots to do and ‘Do’ is the operative word, for at North Lake and many similar centres, the practical approach makes getting away from the tele a real treat..⁹⁹

This and other initiatives were marked by a sense of emancipation on the part of teachers from the traditional methods of teaching. On that, in 1988, a former teacher of media studies shared a memory as follows, “I did a professional development course and I thought it was a heap of fun. I learnt how to use a camera and develop my own films. I was hooked and could not wait to start a media studies course.”¹⁰⁰

The establishment of a mobile media unit in 1976 was another significant step taken to support the development and expansion of media studies in Western Australian schools. It was essentially a V8 utility vehicle with a 21-foot caravan, designed to function as a complete

⁹⁸ B. McMahon, *Voices of Media Literacy: International Pioneers Speak: Barrie McMahon Interview Transcript*, interviewed by T. Jolls (2011), <https://www.medialit.org/reading-room/voices-media-literacy-international-pioneers-speak-barrie-mcmahon-interview-transcript>.

⁹⁹ B. McMahon, No darkroom.. little skill- start with colour slides, *Media Message- A Magazine for Media Teachers*, vol. 3 (1979). p. 15.

¹⁰⁰ R. Quin, A genealogy of media studies, *The Australian Educational Researcher*, vol. 30, no. 1. (2003). p. 109.

audio-visual studio. It was created by the State Department of Education with funding from the School Education Authority in Western Australia, which changed names over the years, and is called the School Curriculum and Standards Authority in 2024. The mobile media unit offered an immersive hands-on experience in media production to students. Teachers could request its services for the conducting of an intensive two-week media program with them, during which they engaged directly with media equipment and gained practical experience. It was loaned out on a roster basis, ensuring that various schools could benefit from it. It was used also for the preparation for the further development of teachers on teaching media studies in schools. Moreover, it played a vital role in taking media studies to regional and rural areas of Western Australia, thus helping to bridge the gap in educational resources and opportunities between urban and remote locations.¹⁰¹

The success of the pilot program at North Lake Senior High School led to the Education Department commissioning a researcher in 1976 to assess its potential for inclusion in the new Certificate of Secondary Education courses, that, as indicated earlier, was specifically designed for less academically inclined students in Years 11 and 12. Dr. Tony Ryan, the researcher in question, and a small group of teachers from North Lake Senior High School collaborated to develop a ‘framework of understandings’. Essential concepts and learning outcomes that would form the basis of a media studies course for the Certificate of Secondary Education were outlined within it. The Board of Secondary Education then approved the product as the syllabus in the field the following Year.¹⁰² During the early period of implementation, the teachers who pioneered the subject had no formal academic credentials in media, communications studies, or cultural studies. Instead, they primarily came from diverse academic backgrounds, including

¹⁰¹ B. McMahon, Mobile Media, *Media Message: the Magazine for Media Teachers*, vol. 1, no. 3. (1975). No page numbers; B McMahon, Media studies 1982, *Little Aidem*, vol 1, no. 1 (1982). pp. 12-13.

¹⁰² Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?* pp. 150-151.

studies in English, art studies, business studies, social studies, and manual arts teaching. In the context of Beeby's stages of development in education systems, then, it could be said that, to some extent, they were located within the 'Stage of Formalism'.¹⁰³ That, it will be recalled, refers to educators who have received basic skills' training but lack a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter they are teaching. Quin¹⁰⁴ also concurred with the latter conclusion. However, as the subject area continued to grow and gain popularity in Western Australian schools, the demand for teachers with specialised training in the teaching of it became apparent.¹⁰⁵ Recognising that, the Western Australian Secondary Teachers College in Nedlands¹⁰⁶ took action to meet the demand. In 1974, the authorities introduced media studies as a curriculum specialisation for trainee teachers. In doing so, they aimed to equip future educators with the necessary knowledge, skills, and theoretical background required to effectively teach media studies in the classroom. This move played a crucial role in enhancing the quality of media education in Western Australian schools from then onwards and ensuring that teachers were adequately prepared to deliver the subject to their students. Soon, new university and teacher's college courses were being designed to ensure that those moving into the profession in the early 1980s would be well versed in theory and production of media. The balance struck, however, produced tension. On that, Quin, who was a lecturer for media studies teachers at WACAE, commented retrospectively on that:

There was always a tension between theory and practice within the course. I was criticised by the Education Department for being too theoretical and training teachers who knew too much theory and not enough practical skills. There were a lot of young active teachers around who wanted to do things rather than think about things. There

¹⁰³ C. Beeby, *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries* (Cambridge, US: Harvard University Press, 1966).

¹⁰⁴ Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?* p. 164.

¹⁰⁵ G. Mercer, Editorial, *Media Message: The Magazine for Media Teachers*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1975).

¹⁰⁶ [Which later became the Western Australian College of Advanced Education and later still Edith Cowan University, established in 1991].

was an active resistance to thinking about what it all meant. That was a major problem in the 1970s and into the 1980s.¹⁰⁷

Yet, by 1977, the first Education Department syllabus for Year 11 and 12 media studies had been released. It was broad in its identification of the understandings, skills and attitudes that should constitute a course of study of the media.

Objectives detailed in the new syllabus included the following on what students should understand: the power and influence of the media, artistic appreciation of media texts, and how to engage in moral and aesthetic discrimination. Media practice was focussed solely on media skills “such as the ability to effectively use still and movie photographic equipment, sound and television equipment”, which are “fundamental skills for students to possess if they are to communicate effectively.” Consistent with the ‘doing the media’ catch phrase from the earlier days, it was also stated that “where possible, the student will develop from skills towards concepts, learning by doing.”¹⁰⁸ However, with its reputation as a field of study for non-academic students, acceptance of the subject for tertiary entrance was still opposed in certain quarters. That led to it being rejected in that regard again in 1977.¹⁰⁹

McMahon was influenced by the ‘dominant ideology’ and ‘ideological effects’ theoretical paradigms that were developing at the time in the places that he visited in his year abroad. These were articulated in the documents published by the London University Institute of Education, the Society for Education in Film, and the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. As previously discussed, he was impressed also by the level of community access to television and participation in a project at Grenoble in France. In addition, the

¹⁰⁷ Quin, *Media studies: finding an identity*.

¹⁰⁸ Board of Secondary Education, *Certificate of Secondary Education and the Tertiary Admissions Examination: Manual 1977-1984, Media Studies* (Perth, Western Australia: Board of Secondary Education, 1977). p. 241.

¹⁰⁹ Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?*

application of Marxist ideological analysis in some Swedish schools also made an impression on him.¹¹⁰

Apart from McMahon, the principal syllabus writer, none of the syllabus writing group had had any previous education in media studies or related industry experience. Relatedly, this first secondary school media studies course for Year 11 and 12 was also based on the experiences and advice of teachers who had never taught the subject at the upper secondary school level. Further, they were restricted by a need to produce for non-university bound students a syllabus that would be acceptable to the Board of Secondary Education. Thus, they borrowed from elements of discourses of media education circulating in other places.¹¹¹

Another influence on the Western Australian media syllabus in the late 1970s was the concept of the communication model. That had indirect links with the mass communication theories of Lazarsfeld and Merton¹¹² of the late 1940s and the cultural theories of Horkheimer and Adorno¹¹³ of the early 1970s. It was an effects-based, linear process approach to understanding mass communication drawn from the theories of Shannon and Weaver, and Lasswell from the late 1940s,¹¹⁴ Berlo's SMCR¹¹⁵ Model of Communication from 1960,¹¹⁶ and concepts from US media education programs developed as part of the 'critical viewing movement' of the mid-1970s that was based on the work of Anderson and Ploghoft at the Broadcast Research Centre and Cooperative Centre for Social Studies at Ohio University in the US. Those at the latter centre published a series of critical viewing curriculum packages for

¹¹⁰ Quin and Quin, *Media education: the development of media education in Western Australian schools*. p. 115.

¹¹¹ Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?* pp. 157-158.

¹¹² P. Lazarsfeld and R. Merton, Mass communication, popular taste and organized social action, in L. Bryson (ed.) *The Communication of Ideas* (New York, US: Cooper Square Publisher, 1964).

¹¹³ M. Horkheimer, T. Adorno, and E. Jephcott, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020).

¹¹⁴ S. Windahl and D. McQuail, *Communication Models For The Study Of Mass Communications* (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2016).

¹¹⁵ [Berlo's SMCR Model of Communication is *sender-message-channel-receiver*]

¹¹⁶ U. Narula, *Communication Models* (New Delhi, India: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2006).

use in US schools¹¹⁷ as part of an effort made by the United States Office of Education to introduce media education by focussing primarily on the critical viewing of television.¹¹⁸ The first curriculum endorsed by the Education Department in Western Australia in 1977 echoed some of the associated notions of power and influence, describing the mass media as an “environment so powerful, so persuasive, that its effects in shaping lives and values is unprecedented in human history”, and stating that the course would empower students to develop the capacity to become “an active receiver” instead of being a “semi-passive receiver of messages”. The notion of skills to “identify the sender's motive” and “evaluate it” was also promoted.¹¹⁹

The persuasive perspective presented by both Adorno and Lazarsfeld on the powerful influence of the medium of television and its influence on the viewer, excerpts of which were distributed by McMahan to media teachers, was circulated through such publications as Mander's *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*. In them, the medium was presented as a dominant narcotising force acting upon a powerless and passive viewer.¹²⁰ However, understandings of what might constitute an effect of the media's influence was not uniform. Moreover, the first Western Australian syllabus avoided any mention of specific media effects.¹²¹

McMahan, the primary designer of the syllabus, also denied that there was any theoretical positioning in the early syllabi. On that, in 1988, he stated: “At the time I worked

¹¹⁷ J. Anderson and M. Ploghoft, *Education in a Television age: The Proceedings of a National Conference on the Subject of Television and Children* (Ohio, USA: The Cooperative Centre for Social Science Education, 1981).

¹¹⁸ K. Tyner, Literacy in a digital world, in *Teaching and Learning in the Age of Information*, Kubey, R. (ed.) (New Jersey, US: Taylor & Francis Pty Ltd. 1998), p. 160.

¹¹⁹ Board of Secondary Education, *Certificate of Secondary Education and the Tertiary Admissions Examination: Manual 1977-1984, Media Studies*. p. 241.

¹²⁰ J. Mander, *Four arguments for the elimination of television* (New York: Perennial, 1978). p. 352; as cited in Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?* p. 163.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

on the syllabus I had never read Althusser, Adorno or Lazarsfeld so I don't see how I could have been influenced by them.” However, he did concede that it was written from a perspective which saw the receiver as being at risk from the ideological messages of the media, by stating:

We could not possibly have used the word ideology in the syllabus. That was a word associated with communism, with the far left. The Board would never have accepted a syllabus that talked about capitalist ideology, but we hinted at it by references to “economic power groups.”¹²²

A more overt influence was the *Primary Media Studies Teachers' Resource Book*, published as a resource to support Western Australian primary school teachers implementing media studies in their classes. It was written by the team involved in the ‘Project Primedia’ pilot program that was conducted in 1978 and was designed to ensure that children emerging from the primary school programme enjoyed a smooth transition into secondary school media studies courses.¹²³ The rest of the chapter is now concerned with detailing what was involved in the Primedia Program.

The Primedia Program

A major influence on the Primedia Program was stated as follows:

The basis of all education is communication. What we are attempting to produce is a course for primary students in communication through Media Studies... There are numerous theories and definitions about communication. One of the most concise is David Berlo's model of communication. It is simple and versatile with the four key components standing for- source, message, channel and receiver.¹²⁴

The informing communication theory was based on one derived from the works of Shannon and Weaver, Lasswell, and Anderson and Ploghoft that, as has already been pointed out, had a major influence on the secondary school media course described earlier.¹²⁵

¹²² B. McMahon, *Interview with Barrie McMahon*, interviewed by R. Quin. As cited in *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia-Whose Knowledge?*

¹²³ B. McMahon et al., *Primary Media Studies Teachers' Resource Book*, G. Sellar et al. (edts), (Perth, Western Australia: Education Department, 1979). p. 347.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 329; Narula, *Communication Models*.

¹²⁵ Windahl and McQuail, *Communication models for the study of mass communications*.

Another influence on the Primedia program was Project Viewpoint. That was conducted at the Sam Barlow High School in Oregon, USA, and related to the educational effect of visual thinking teaching methods. The results showed that a visual literacy approach had a positive effect on learning.

The influence of the arts

The Primedia team also predicted that in Australia, media studies would eventually become a subject that would be seen as an arts or humanities discipline. The argument was that “the Arts are symbolic with the modern mass media and to some Media has become another one of the Arts.”¹²⁶ Significant too is that the Primedia project used the same media technologies as those available in secondary schools at the time and engaged with them in a similar way.

That, it was stated was important because:

We cannot ignore the influence of technology and industry on Media education. Media skills are central to media comprehension and media skills imply the utilization of media equipment and materials. Technology has produced the video portapak, videotape, film, chemicals, cameras and processes which give the lay person an opportunity to experiment, discover and become more aware.¹²⁷

The following was added:

The teachers were supported by an advisory media staff member, who spend a week in each school with the mobile media resources, located in the recently built primary media caravan, and media kits containing film, video, audio or photographic and consumables (which are available on a term-loan basis).¹²⁸

At the time also, the Education Department funded an advisory media staff member to support the implementation of media studies in WA schools.

An anthropological influence was also detailed in the primary resource book, including in the statement that the rituals, lifestyles and forms of communication had been greatly influenced by technology and industry in modern society. Relatedly, it was argued that the

¹²⁶ McMahon et al., *Primary Media Studies Teachers' Resource Book*. p. 334.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 334.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 346

work of the famous anthropologist Dr Edmund Carpenter was important in that regard. The perceived connection was stated thus:

English is a medium. All languages are mass media. The new mass media- film, radio, TV are all new languages, their grammars are yet unknown. Each codifies reality differently, each conceals a unique metaphysics. Linguists tell us that it is possible to say anything in any language if you use enough words and images, but there is rarely time. The natural course is for a culture to exploit its media biases.¹²⁹

Teachers are also likely to have been influenced by the position outlined for primary schools that “the modern mass media perform a special organising function by virtue of their persuasiveness, their symbolic, central and accessible nature. Television especially works to certify reality.”¹³⁰ On the latter, the authors of the program identified television as the most influential medium of the day and noted that it had become much the focus of media studies in various countries. They then stated:

Television creates and controls controversy, it is foremost in disseminating news, and in that is authoritative and judgemental. The people who control the television channels have immense power, and though reported and editors claim to work by a code of objectivity, that law is unwritten and open to interpretation.

We need to be aware of the potential the mass media, in particular television, have in effecting human behaviour; be it blatant or subtle. Politically the media can be used as invincible tools for creating and maintaining public consciousness or ignorance.¹³¹

The authors of the Primedia program made reference also to the influence of Alvin Toffler, futurologist of the day,¹³² in considering the role of media studies in meeting the challenge of the needs of a new cohort of non-tertiary bound students. They added:

The students you have in school today will be running our society by the end of the century, a time when the media will have an even greater hand in determining the way they will think, feel, and know about the world. If they are to cope with the changes ahead, they will have to develop new critical attitudes toward the media. For them

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 334. [Authors referencing Dr Edmund Carpenter’s influence on the Media Studies curriculum: M. McLuhan and E. S. Carpenter, *Explorations in Communication: An Anthology* (Boston, US: Beacon Press, 1960). p. 162].

¹³⁰ McMahan et al., *Primary Media Studies Teachers' Resource Book*. p. 334.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* p. 335.

¹³² *Ibid.* p. 335

especially, understanding the media will be more than an intellectual exercise, *and doing the media will be more than an activity.*¹³³

The prediction here that the future of media education would involve having more scope than just practical activities and an intellectual process was, in fact, realised in later years in schools in Western Australia.¹³⁴ In other words, while the discourse of media studies in the seventies limited the instruction approach in media studies to primarily student media production, it eventually came to relate to such new objects of study as video games and social media, the use of new pedagogical approaches like textual analysis, and the notion of student agency.¹³⁵

Textbooks and other teacher support materials

For media studies in schools in Western Australia in the 1960s and 1970s, there was no officially prescribed textbook. However, the subject was richly supported by several documents. For example, McMahon and several teacher volunteers formed an editorial team to create a subject 'magazine' to support teachers. In it they provided examples of teacher programs, lessons, and teaching activities, as well as information regarding how to engage in the use of various practical media tasks.

The magazine, *Media Message*, was originally published by the Western Australian Secondary Teachers' College.¹³⁶ Assisting McMahon was a team that included Guy Mercer as the first editor and Brian Shoesmith as the first assistant editor. In the editorial of the second

¹³³ *Ibid.* p. 335. [Author making reference to the influence of Alvin Toffler and Marshall McLuhan on the media curriculum. A. Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York, US: Random House, 1970); M. McLuhan, *Counterblast* (New York, US: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969).

¹³⁴ McMahon et al., *Primary Media Studies Teachers' Resource Book*. p. 335 [author quoting from Laybourne, K. *Doing the Media- A Portfolio of Activities, Ideas and Resources* (Chicago: Dantree Press, 1978). p. 11].

¹³⁵ Quin, A genealogy of media studies. p. 104

¹³⁶ J. A. McKenzie, *Twenty-Five Years: A History of Claremont Teachers College 1952-1977* (Perth, Western Australia: Claremont Teachers College, 1981). [Responding to the increase in secondary school students as a result of compulsory high school retention, the Claremont Teachers College extended their primary teacher training courses to train secondary trained teachers. The outcomes were that the Secondary Teachers College in Nedlands was established to specifically train secondary teachers for the first time in 1967. Later the Secondary Teachers College and other Teaching Colleges-Graylands, Churchlands, and Mount Lawley amalgamated as a multi campus university called the Western Australian College of Advanced Education, later renamed Edith Cowan University].

edition, they stated that the magazine had been created as an information forum for the minority, who had accepted the relevance of all forms of the media to education.¹³⁷

Recognising the need for teacher training to develop and sustain the new subject area, the editor also stated as follows in the second edition of the magazine:

If we are to maintain our credibility, then media studies teachers must be thoroughly trained. This must start in the training colleges, but must also take in practitioners already in the field. Although courses are slowly becoming available too little encouragement is being given for existing teachers to take part.¹³⁸

Also, in the editorial in the June/July 1975 issue it was stated that the aim of the work was to provide a forum of ideas and suggestions, a place to pass on experience and a source of inspiration for those days when nothing goes right.¹³⁹ Moreover, in 1979, McMahon, as the new editor of the magazine, wrote “A number of media journals exist to cater for the media professionals and the media philosophers, but there is very little available in terms of practical suggestions for practicing teachers. *Media Message* hopes to again, fill part of this gap.”¹⁴⁰

The magazine then, in the absence of a textbook in the field at this point, served to construct a body of knowledge about media studies.¹⁴¹ Then in 1978, resource booklets were compiled by the media studies advisory team at the Department of Education and were distributed to all teachers of media studies. One of those consisted of program outlines for teachers teaching Year 11 and 12 students. They dealt with newspapers, posters, magazines, comics, film, photography, television, and radio. Another such book, titled *Supplementary Material* consisted of a reproduction of handouts and photocopies from magazines, journals

¹³⁷ Mercer, *Editorial*.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ B. McMahon, Mini editorial, *Media Message- A Magazine for Media Teachers*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1979).

¹⁴¹ Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?* p. 170.

and equipment manuals. Moreover, both sets of material were organised in relation to film, photography, print, radio and television.¹⁴²

Conclusion

The 1960s and 1970s were a time of significant technological developments, and cultural and curriculum change in Western Australia, which provided the environment and the funding for media studies to be developed in secondary schools. This chapter was concerned with the history of media studies in secondary schools during the 1960s to the 1970s, with particular reference to Western Australia. First, the broad historical context of national developments in Australia at the time was presented. Secondly, general developments in relation to schooling and curriculum internationally, in Australia, and in the State of Western Australia, were detailed. Thirdly, general developments in media education were discussed. Specific attention was then paid to media education for secondary schools in WA during the period. This new field of study, developed for Western Australian secondary schools by Barrie McMahon, was influenced by European and American cultural studies.

Whilst global research on media literacy highlights the necessity for further research into the media literacy of school students due to media education, the media studies curricula during this era provided a rich and supportive environment to challenge students to produce their own media products and to practice 'learning by doing'. The establishment and growth of media studies in Western Australian schools were the result of the opportunities arising from education reform in the 1970s.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* p. 170. Quin and Quin, Media education: the development of media education in Western Australian schools.

CHAPTER 5

THE 1980S AND 1990S: A SHIFT IN PEDAGOGY

Introduction

The concern in this chapter is with the history of media studies in secondary schools during the 1980s and the 1990s, with particular reference to Western Australia. First, the broad historical context is presented. Secondly, general developments in relation to media education are considered. The principal focus of the chapter, namely, media education for secondary schools in WA during the period, is then addressed.

The Broad Historical Context

As discussed previously, from the time of the dismissal of the Whitlam Labor government in 1975 until 1991, there was only one change of Federal government in Australia when Bob Hawke was appointed Prime Minister in 1983.¹ The economic context is that by the late 1970s, following harsh government measures, inflation was down, unemployment levels had stabilised, and government spending was reduced. In contrast, however, both inflation and unemployment climbed to over 10 per cent in the early 1980s, and by 1982-1983 Australia was in a deep economic recession.

In the mid-1980s, two associated terms became prominent in political and economic debate in the nation, namely, 'economic rationalism' and 'globalisation'. Relatedly, the Federal Government was called upon to legitimate the privatisation of various government enterprises and the closing of various public services and schools. Subsequently, unemployment rose through workplace redundancies and the closing of manufacturing plants.²

¹ Macintyre, *The Concise History of Australia*.

² J. Walter, Growth resumed, 1983-2000, in A. Bashford and S. Macintyre (eds.) *The Cambridge History of Australia: The Commonwealth of Australia* (Victoria, Australia: Cambridge University Press, 2013). pp. 162-186.

Soaring inflation fuelled by a damaging spiral of rising prices and rising wages to meet the rise in the cost of living followed.³ At the time too, when Australian society was more multicultural than previously, there was a general feeling of anxiety due to the fiscal insecurity brought on by the economic recession and rising unemployment.⁴ The Fraser Government's response was to increase control on public spending and place restraint on wage increases.

When Prime Minister Bob Hawke's Labor Party came to office,⁵ the government introduced a new 'economic liberalisation' approach aimed at making the nation's economy more productive and competitive.⁶ It cautiously and conservatively implemented such economic reform strategies as negotiating a wages accord with the trade unions, floating the Australian dollar on the stock exchange, and allowing foreign banks into the Australian market for the first time.⁷

While that new approach was aimed at making the nation's economy more productive and globally competitive, it echoed too the societal fear of outside influences, and it was met by public opposition.⁸ Ultimately, however, what eventuated provided some protection from a later 1997 Asian financial crisis.¹⁰

The 1980s was a time when only one in five households had a male income earner where a housewife was at home with the children. Further, due to divorce, death, and unmarried mothers, many children were living in single parent households.¹¹ The public now also came to recognise more than previously that there were gay couples, single parents, and parents

³ Macintyre, *The Concise History of Australia*.

⁴ Strangio, *Instability*. pp. 135-161.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Walter, *Growth resumed, 1983-2000*. p. 166.

⁷ Macintyre, *The Concise History of Australia*.

⁸ Walter, *Growth resumed, 1983-2000*. p. 166.

⁹ Macintyre, *The Concise History of Australia*.

¹⁰ ABC News Online. *Nine Ways Bob Hawke's Government Changed Australia*. 16 May 2019. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-05-16/bob-hawke-legacy-nine-things-he-got-done-in-office/6514794>.

¹¹ H. McQueen, *Social Sketches of Australia 1888-2001*, (Queensland, Australia: Penguin Books Australia, 2004).

supporting children of working age still living at home as they were unable to provide a deposit for a house of their own.¹² Changes in the family structure and entertainment resulted too in a new strain on schooling. Then, in 1987, a major stock market crash affected stock market values around the world and had a significant impact on the Australian economy.¹³

During the 1980s too, Australian society was less authoritarian, more participative, and more liberal than previously. There was also a more sensitive interest than previously in women's liberation, indigenous and other disadvantaged groups, and the conservation of the heritage and the land. Relatedly, the community was now able to benefit from television and radio news for information and opinion. Nearly 90 per cent of television sets in Australian homes were colour sets while only a mere two per cent of the population had no television at all. Also, television viewing was at its peak, with many Australians, who were working longer hours, using it to provide them with their preferred down-time activity at the end of the day. Relatedly, the Australian film industry had financial success following the screenings of such movies as *Mad Max* and *Crocodile Dundee*.¹⁴

In 1987, 55 per cent of houses also had a new form of technology, namely, the VHS player or the video player. That satisfied consumer demand for choice alongside the programming schedules of commercial television.¹⁵ It was a time too when everyday living was rather saturated with advertising, resulting in greater consumption than ever before of packaged goods and processed foods. Movie theatres too were on the rise.

Societal groups at the time had also begun to make an extensive investment in such technological developments as computing, micro-electronics, advanced mining, agricultural

¹² Macintyre, *The Concise History of Australia*.

¹³ Connell, *Reshaping Australian Education 1960-1985*. [As a result, huge financial institutions in Australia had to be rescued by the government. Moreover, by July 1990 the country's economy was again in recession].

¹⁴ G. Maddox, *The 25 Australian Films that have Sold the Most Tickets at The Box Office*, Sydney Morning Herald, 1 April 2021). <https://www.smh.com.au/culture/movies/the-25-australian-films-that-have-sold-the-most-tickets-at-the-box-office-20210330-p57fc4.html>.

¹⁵ McQueen, *Social Sketches of Australia 1888-2001*.

construction, and transport machinery. In short, Australia had become largely dominated by a culture of persuasion, participation, widespread interests, development, and economic management. The 1987 stock market crash, however, as indicated already, affected stock market values around the world. Huge financial institutions in Australia now had to be rescued by the Federal government and, by July 1990, the country's economy was again in recession.

When Paul Keating became Prime Minister in December 1991, his focus was on domestic economic problems. He set out to improve workforce skills, reform the labour market, introduce a national compulsory superannuation scheme providing security for retirement, increase national savings, and enable the government to redirect aged pensions to finance government programs. Relatedly, and of significance for media studies, the World Wide Web was created in 1991. Even amongst the most technologically elite, few people predicted the actual impact it would have in the future, including on media studies.¹⁶

As employment in the manufacturing sector declined through the restructuring of the nation's economy, there was growth in the services sector and a shift away from manual and trade work to professional and clerical employment.¹⁷ Unemployment remained high throughout the 1980s, never falling below 7 per cent.¹⁸ Industrial centres were hit hard, young school leavers could not find work, and recently-arrived immigrants were more likely to be unemployed than were Australian born people.¹⁹ Then, as total migration numbers declined, the Asian component of it rose 31 per cent in the early 1980s, due mainly to refugees arriving from conflict zones in South East Asia.²⁰ A Government response was to introduce new programs to encourage youth to engage in training.²¹

¹⁶ P. Keating, *Engagement- Australia faces the Asia-Pacific* (Sydney, Australia: Pan Macmillan Australia Pty Ltd, 2000). Walter, Growth resumed, 1983-2000.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ H. McQueen (2004). *Social Sketches of Australia 1888-2001*. p. 267.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 183

²¹ Connell, *Reshaping Australian Education 1960-1985*.

A significant influence on education policy at the time was a series of articles published by *The Australian* reporter, Greg Sheridan, on the topic of neoliberal reform in the sector. Those in 1985 pertaining to what he claimed was the dire state of the education system, while not providing solid evidence, constituted a persuasive propaganda tool to push a neoliberal agenda. In one of those, he stated that “in general, Australian education is a disaster. It is as if the whole Government school system has had a collective nervous breakdown, and no longer has any idea of its real identity.”²² In addition, education was blamed for ‘failures’ in society and the economy. Teachers were expected to fix a new generation of supposed delinquent teenagers, to improve their morals, to stop them drinking, and to help them to get them a job.

General Developments in Schooling and Curriculum Internationally, in Australia and in the State of Western Australia

The latter situation reflected that in many countries from the 1980s, namely, one of education being seen to be directly pertaining to the economy.²³ That view was due to various factors reported by researchers. Those included economic decline and increasing competition, weaker state legitimacy, cultural revitalisation, and a general decline in education performance.²⁴ There were also international dimensions to the developments that took place. What resulted internationally was what Sahlberg termed the ‘global education reform movement’, or GERM, when describing a new global orthodoxy in international education reform.²⁵ On that, policy makers in some developed nations were arguing that their education systems needed to be

²² G. Sheridan, *The Lies They Tell Our Children*, *The Weekend Australian*, 2 February 1985, <https://economics.org.au/2013/05/greg-sheridan-the-lies-they-teach-our-children/>.

²³ S. Marginson, *The new right and education*, *Educating Australia: Government, Economy and Citizen since 1960* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997). pp. 119-145.

²⁴ H. Daun, National forces, globalization and educational restructuring: some European response patterns, *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, vol. 27, no. 1 (1997). pp. 19-41.

²⁵ P. Sahlberg, *How GERM is Infecting Schools Around the World*, *SOS Australia: Fighting for Equality in Education* (2012). <https://saveourschools.com.au/choice-and-competition/how-germ-is-infecting-schools-around-the-world>.

adjusted to assist their populations in staying abreast of economic, technological, and social transformations emerging globally.²⁶

In the 1980s and 1990s, governments and such inter-governmental organisations as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the European Commission, and the World Bank also, promoted a related development, namely, that of the ‘internationalisation of the curriculum.’²⁷ Soon the appeal on that was heard around the world,²⁸ with education coming to be viewed as a global commodity, fully internationalised, and even internationally tradable.²⁹ It was described too as being intimately connected to a knowledge economy, the teaching of learning capabilities,³⁰ and dealing with diverse and rapidly changing conditions of the workplace with creativity and ingenuity.³¹ Relatedly, within Australia, which in the early 1980s was plagued by the global economic recession,³² economic rationalism, human capital theory, corporate managerialism and neo-corporatism, came to be incorporated in the policy making processes of Bob Hawke’s Federal Labor government.³³ With significant unemployment levels, entry into higher education became very competitive and students became less likely to come from the public schooling system. Neoliberalist privatisation was exemplified by an increase in the private school sector in all States and Territories.³⁴ Soon,

²⁶ D. Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007).

²⁷ F. Rizvi and L. Walsh, Difference, globalisation and the internationalisation of curriculum, *Australian Universities' Review*, vol. 41, no. 2 (1998). pp. 7-11.

²⁸ F. Rizvi, Internationalism of curriculum: a critical perspective, in M. Hayden, J. Levy, and J. J. Thompson (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Research in International Education*. (London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd, 2015). pp. 337-350.

²⁹ A. Green, The many faces of lifelong learning: recent education policy trends in Europe, *Journal of Education Policy*, vol. 17, no. 6. (2002). pp. 611-626.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² S. Marginson, The anti-citizen 1975-1990. *Educating Australia: Government, Economy and Citizen since 1960* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997). p. 71.

³³ K. Kennedy, P. Marland, and A. Sturman, Implementing National Curriculum Statements and profiles: corporate federalism in retreat?, *Forum of Education*, vol. 51, no. 2 (1996). pp. 33-43.

³⁴ Campbell and Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*. p. 213.

administrative teams from government and non-government schools were pushed to promote points of difference between their respective sectors. One consequence was that various schools began offering new subject and course specialisations to bring about increased enrolments.³⁵

High unemployment and a perceived need for students to be educated for the world of work, as well as an increase in understanding that education qualifications are an “important factor in a person’s access to employment, a career structure in a professional occupation with relative security of tenure, good income and fringe benefits” came increasingly to influence policy on schooling.³⁶ Australian students now remained at school into the senior years in greater numbers.³⁷

Concurrently, there was a shift in the function of Australian schools. Earlier progressive notions of education for enjoyment were replaced by a focus on raising literacy standards and of schooling meeting the needs of the economy. More rigorous testing of students’ skills followed. The primary emphasis was on job creation and training.³⁸

To facilitate the task of the national economic structural adjustment envisaged, the Federal government deemed that a ‘national curriculum’ was required. The associated learning areas that were endorsed were English, mathematics, science, languages other than English, technology, studies of society and environment, the arts, and health. ‘National curriculum statements’ and ‘profiles’ for each learning area were to be prepared. By June 1993, these were referred to as ‘student outcome statements’ in Western Australia. They were expected to be outlines of the main knowledge and skills for each learning area, the essential elements (‘strands’), and the learning outcomes. In 1993, for the first time, ‘media arts’, was positioned

³⁵ MacKinnon and Proctor, Education.

³⁶ A. Jamrozik, C. Boland, and R. Urquhard, *Social Change and Cultural Transformation in Australia* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995). p. 56.

³⁷ Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?*

³⁸ Macintyre, *The Concise History of Australia*. p. 265.

within the broader learning area of ‘the arts’, instead of within the broader association of English.

Within the State, however, related developments had already been underway. In 1984, the Government commissioned the Beazley report, ‘Education in Western Australia: Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Education in Western Australia’.³⁹ As a result, recommendations were made to abolish the State’s Achievement Certificate for school leavers and replace it with a curriculum based on a unit system of seven major subject areas.⁴⁰ That allowed students to pick and choose units from all areas of the education map provided and aimed to solve such perceived problems as the status of subjects, student failures of subjects, certification, tertiary selection procedures, teaching, community participation in schooling; gender equality and migrant students with language difficulties.⁴¹

A second report, commonly referred to as the McGaw Report, was released by a Ministerial Working Party on School Certification and Tertiary Admissions Procedures. Whilst “the Beazley Report provided a sense of the *what?* and the *why?* of curriculum change for secondary education, this gave a comprehensive blueprint for *how* that change might be implemented in upper secondary schooling.”⁴²

A Secondary Education Authority (SEA) was then formed and was charged with the administration of a new system. The hierarchy of subjects remained intact. Subjects were

³⁹ Beazley, The Commonwealth Ministry of Education: an experience in the Whitlam Government 1972–75. [Beazley was the former Federal Minister for Education during the Whitlam Labor Government from December 1972 through to November 1975].

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ K. E. Beazley, *Education in Western Australia: Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Education in Western Australia*, (Beazley Report). (Perth, Western Australia: Education Department, 1984); B. Leggett and R. White, *Waves of change: The critical role of assessment, reporting and accreditation in secondary curriculum reform in WA 1975-2005*, in L. Yates, C. Collins, and K. O'Connor (eds.) *Australia's Curriculum Dilemmas: State Cultures and the Big Issues* (Victoria, Australia: Melbourne University Press, 2011); B. McGaw, *Assessment in the Upper Secondary School in Western Australia: Report on the Ministerial Working Party on School Certification and Tertiary Admission Procedures*, (Perth, Western Australia: Western Australian Government, 1984).

⁴² Leggett and White, *Waves of change: The critical role of assessment, reporting and accreditation in secondary curriculum reform in WA 1975-2005*.

categorised as TEE (for tertiary entrance examination), and non-TEE school-based assessed and vocational subjects. Then, in 1988, the 'Unit Curriculum' was launched in Western Australia for those in lower secondary schools (Years 8 to 10), and it was compulsory that it be provided in Education Department schools.⁴³ Within the elective stream, a number of units of study for media studies could be selected for study.⁴⁴

A second wave of education reform was introduced in Western Australia in 1993. It was based on the Vickery 'Review of Education and Training Report' that was produced by the Review Committee of the Western Australian Education Department.⁴⁵ Vickery and colleagues espoused the emerging international ideology of a neoliberal schooling system connected to the market that had gained momentum in the latter years of the Hawke and Keating Governments. The new neoliberal focus was on providing work-ready graduates. Up until that time, the Western Australian TEE courses were focussed on ensuring that students were ready for tertiary entrance requirements, and knowledge, analysis and abstract concepts were emphasised. VET courses now became more revered for their focus on industry-based skills. However, teachers needed specific accreditation to be able to teach them, thus making their provision in schools expensive and time prohibitive.⁴⁶

In 1998 a new curriculum titled, 'Curriculum Framework for Kindergarten to Year 12 Education in Western Australia',⁴⁷ was implemented. It signalled a shift to an outcomes-based

⁴³ C Marsh, Putting the Beazley Report into action: The unit curriculum, *Curriculum Concerns*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1987). pp. 15-42; J. E. Johnston and L. J. Rennie, *Structural Change in Curriculum: The Implications for Gender Equality in Science and Mathematics* (Publisher not identified: Distributed by ERIC Clearinghouse, 1990).

⁴⁴ J. Keane. Personal correspondence. Julie was a media teacher in Western Australia during the 1980s. [Whilst it was a compulsory for government schools to implement the Unit Curriculum, only a handful of non-government schools chose to implement it].

⁴⁵ R. L. Vickery, *Review of Education, Employment and Training* (Perth, Western Australia: Review Committee, Department of Education, 1993).

⁴⁶ Leggett and White, *Waves of change: The critical role of assessment, reporting and accreditation in secondary curriculum reform in WA 1975-2005*.

⁴⁷ Curriculum Council of Western Australia, *Curriculum Framework for Kindergarten to Year 12 Education in Western Australia* (Perth, WA: Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 1998).

schooling approach.⁴⁸ In the Curriculum Framework, a stated outcome was a description of what students should know, understand, and value, as result of the teaching and learning program. Also, student progression was to be demonstrated in levels. Relatedly, the State Department of Education released ‘Student Outcomes Statements’⁴⁹ which provided the basis for assessment. Those were closely aligned with the Federal Government’s ‘National Profile Statements’ being developed by the Australian Education Council (the council of State and Federal Education Ministers).

Overall, though, what was promoted was a radical approach to teaching and learning that was unfamiliar to many teachers, including those who became responsible for teaching media studies. The international developments in relation to the latter which also came to have an influence on the individuals are now considered.

General Developments in Media Education

In the 1960s, when considered at all, “television tended to be evaluated as an inferior form of cinema.”⁵⁰ In fact, that was the pattern of response seen in the introduction of nearly all new media forms. Yet by the 1980s and 1990s, media literacy was mandated in Canada, with all schools being responsible for delivering media literacy across the curriculum. Concurrently, media educators from around the world were meeting to share curricula, research, and teaching strategies with increasing frequency as international travel and communication became more accessible than previously. Also, international media education conferences were held

⁴⁸ A. Alderson and M. Martin, Outcomes based education: Where has it come from and where is it going?, *Issues in Educational Research*, vol. 17. no 2 (2007). pp. 161-182; Leggett and White, *Waves of change: The critical role of assessment, reporting and accreditation in secondary curriculum reform in W.A. 1975-2005*; H Lee, Outcomes-based education and the cult of educational efficiency: Using curriculum and assessment reforms to drive educational policy and practice, *Education Research and Perspectives*, vol. 3, no. 29 (2003) pp. 60-107; T. O'Donoghue, *Understanding Contemporary Education* (Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2017). p. 100.

⁴⁹ Educational Department of Western Australia (EDWA), *Overview: Student Outcome Statements*, (Perth, Western Australia: EDWA, 1998).

⁵⁰ L. Masterman, A rationale for media education, in R. Kubey (edt.) *Media Literacy in the Information Age: Current Perspectives*, (New Brunswick, Canada: Transaction Publishers, 2001). pp. 15-68.

regularly, including the Summit 2000 entitled ‘Children, Youth and the Media: Beyond the Millennium’, held in Toronto, Canada, in May 2000.

Whilst US popular culture dominated much of Western popular culture at the time, the development of media education was slower in taking place there than it was in other nations, including Canada, UK, and Australia. That partly was because curricula in the US were governed solely by each individual State, as stated previously. By 2000, however, there was at least one or more elements of media education in US core curriculum frameworks.⁵¹

US media education at the time was strongly dominated by a protectionist approach. The development of media technologies during the period also shaped the nature of what was taught in media studies in schools. It was time when there were “32.8 million Americans aged between four and twelve years, with parents spending \$140 billion a year on films, records, video games, computer programs, and fashion.” As a result, “children’s consumption of media”, it was concluded, “was a growing profitable commercial industry.”⁵²

In the US, too, the ‘back to basics’ movement had the result of shifting media education for much of the 1980s away from critical viewing to a curriculum constructed under the banner of technology education. In fact, media studies as a form of technology education became popular as it fitted a popular ‘job readiness’ mould and also exploited the West’s fascination with technology. The focus was on the use of technology and not on the more controversial curriculum that critiqued the social implications of its developments. That form of media curriculum was considered to be ‘safe’. Students were not encouraged to question the media. Rather, they were just given technology to produce it.

⁵¹ B. Ruben, Introduction to the 2001 edition, media education: the evolution continues, *Media Literacy in the Information Age: Current Perspectives*, (New Brunswick, Canada: Transaction Publishers, 2001) pp. Introduction, ix.

⁵² B. McMahon and R. Quin, Living with the tiger: media curriculum issues for the future, *Media Literacy in the Information Age: Current Perspectives*, (New Brunswick, Canada: Transaction Publishers, 2001). pp. 307-322.

An influencing factor in relation to the latter situation was that television was often blamed for what were considered the negative effects of capitalism on society. As Tyner, put it, “it is much easier to denounce the tube, the perfect delivery system for consumerism, than it is to resolve the inherent conflict of values raised by America’s traditional, fierce, and uneasy grafting of free market capitalism in democratic principles.”⁵³

The political agenda at that time in the US was focussed also on the effects of television and consumerism on children as many were becoming increasingly overweight due to eating the junk food advertised on television. There was also a reduction in the overall level of exercise undertaken. In response, the National Institute of Mental Health, and the American Academy of Pediatrics formulated some helpful guidelines on the restriction of children’s television viewing time out of concern for their mental and physical health.

In the UK, the murder of James Bulger by two teenage boys in 1993 in Liverpool, sent shockwaves through the British public. Media reports initially attempted to explain the atrocity in terms of poverty and economic recession, but it wasn’t long before there were reports reflecting an all-too-familiar rhetoric to explain the reason behind the killings, namely, the media itself. Television executives were deemed responsible, and they actioned new guidelines on TV violence that were published. British Board of Film Classification, in response, commissioned research on the viewing habits of young offenders. TV talk show hosts also were eager to blame teenage delinquent behaviour on exposure to violence in the media.⁵⁴

The most prevalent headline for the Bulger trial was that the new generation of video games was to blame for the murderers’ actions. It was noted that at the time no “feature article

⁵³ K. Tyner, The tale of the elephant- media education in the United States, in C. Bazalgette, E. Bevort, and J. Savino (eds.) *New Directions- Media Education Worldwide*, (London, UK: British Film Institute, 1992). p. 172.

⁵⁴ D. Buckingham and J. Sefton-Green, Multimedia education: media literacy in the age of digital culture, *Media Literacy in the Information Age: Current Perspectives*. (New Brunswick, Canada: Transaction Publishers, 2001). pp. 285-306.

about the murder was complete without reference to computer games and the arcade as if, for all the world... such arcades should be in the dock alongside the accused.”⁵⁵ The practice of blaming the media provided a simplistic reassuring explanation of events that were too challenging or painful to face, and shifted the focus away from more complex underlying causes that were much harder to amend.⁵⁶

At the same time, it became a particularly difficult time for maintaining the value of media education in schools. Leading UK media education expert, Cary Bazalgette, stated that the Year 1993 “was the darkest time for media education in the UK, when it looked like the government was going to remove all references to media education in the new national curriculum.” “We (at the British Film Institute)”, she went on, “ran a ‘Commission of Inquiry into English and Media in the National Curriculum.’”⁵⁷

The report of that body provided evidence for the value of media studies in British schools and was successful not only in helping to keep media education from disappearing from the curriculum, but also in convincing the education decision makers that there was something of value in media studies in children’s education further to just being a prophylactic against indoctrination.⁵⁸ During the period also, Bazalgette identified that few governments in the developing world were prepared to take the political risk of abandoning traditional subjects for newer subjects considered by some to be ‘radical’ and even ‘subversive’.

In Australia, television, VHS, music videos and video games had a large influence on teenagers. Much of the related content came from the US, “whereas Americans’ exposure to

⁵⁵ M. Barker, Sex, violence and videotape, *Sight and Sound*, vol. 3, no. 5 (1993). pp. 10-12.

⁵⁶ Buckingham and Sefton-Green, *Multimedia Education: Media Literacy in the Information Age: Current Perspectives*, (New Brunswick, Canada: Transaction Publishers, 2001). pp. 285-306.

⁵⁷ Bazalgette, *Cary Bazalgette Interview Transcript*.

⁵⁸ C. Bazalgette, An agenda for the second phase of media literacy development, *Media Literacy in the Information Age: Current Perspectives*, (New Brunswick, Canada: Transaction Publishers, 2001). pp. 69-78.

Australian culture was in comparison miniscule.”⁵⁹ The States of Western Australia and Queensland have been described as the first major players in the construction of the media studies’ discipline in Australian schools.⁶⁰ Indeed, WA was an acknowledged leader in the nation in the practice of, and curriculum development in the field, particularly in the early foundation decades of the 1970s and 1980s.⁶¹ Other Australian states implemented media studies as a discrete subject and in some instances it was taught within the subject English.

By the 1990s, however, media education, and not just in Western Australia was subject to the wave of neoliberal education policy nationally discussed earlier in this chapter. Kress describes as follows the continued struggle of media studies was still a marginal subject at this time:

In the politics of this debate, as it presents itself in Australia, for instance, the key terms are: notions of relevance to national economic outcomes; emphases on basic educational skills, on training for the workforce, a reduction of offerings in the curriculum, a focus on ‘core’ elements of the curriculum at the expense of those that are seen as marginal and therefore expendable; on excellence, raising of standards, assessable criteria, evaluation and accountability. This at least in Australia, is the context in which arguments for an enhanced place of media education (never mind new directions) will have to proceed.

He concluded by saying, “clearly this context (or whatever others obtain in a particular society) cannot be ignored in thinking, planning and lobbying for the media curriculum.”⁶²

⁵⁹ P. Greenaway, Media and arts education: a global view of Australia, *Media Literacy in the Information Age: Current Perspectives*, (New Brunswick, Canada: Transaction Publishers, 2001). pp. 187-198.

⁶⁰ J. Frow, Australian cultural studies: theory, story, history, *Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1. (2007) pp. 59-75

⁶¹ J. Piette and L. Giroux, The theoretical foundations of media education programs, *Media Literacy in the Information Age: Current Perspectives*, (New Brunswick, Canada: Transaction Publishers, 2001). pp. 89-134.

⁶² G. Kress, Media literacy as cultural technology in the age of transcultural media, C. Bazalgette, E. Bevort, and J. Savino (eds.), *New Directions: Media Education Worldwide*. pp. 190-202.

Developments in Media Education in Western Australia

In this section, the focus is on examining developments in relation to the 'official subject knowledge' of media studies relating to the secondary school curriculum in Western Australia⁶³ during the 1980s and 1990s. In general, those were characterised by a number of observable changes. First, the nature of the curriculum reflected the influence of a shift in cultural theory espoused by a number of international cultural and semiotic theorists, including Masterman, Aronowitz, Giroux, Hall, and Barthes. Secondly, international cultural theory academics including Fiske, Hartley, Jeffrey, Whitford, and Turner moved to Western Australian universities, and influenced WA media studies curriculum development and textbook writing. Thirdly, numerous local textbooks and teacher support materials were also written. At the time also, as will be recalled, Western Australia was the first State in Australia in which media was introduced as a school subject. Moreover, WA media studies influenced developments that followed in other States. Further afield, the Scottish Education Department's media syllabus modules were drawn directly from the Western Australian lower secondary school media studies' courses. In similar vein, collaboration between media educators from different countries took place, including through guest speaker keynote deliveries at ATOM (Australian Teachers of Media) national conferences and through the sharing of resources transnationally. Regarding the latter, McMahon and Quin commented in 1988:

The congruence of thinking across the world is not merely coincidence. There has been significant cross fertilization of ideas through various conferences. In some cases consultation and even direct collusion have occurred as was the case with the Western Australian and Scottish courses. The media studies fraternity is a small international community and its members have willingly shared their ideas. Textbooks too, readily cross-national boundaries and this enables common curriculum priorities to become common classroom practice. The global village is now subjected to scrutiny by the global media classrooms.⁶⁴

⁶³ Goodson, *The Changing Curriculum: Studies in Social Construction*.

⁶⁴ B. McMahon and R. Quin, Media studies in schools- into the next era, *Tijdschrift voor Theaterwetenschap*, vol. 10. no. 1 (1988). p. 3.

In addition, their media studies textbooks were adapted and published in North America and the UK. Furthermore, local WA leaders in school media education were invited regularly to address conferences of educators in Europe and North America, and their articles were easily published in international journals of education.⁶⁵

As a result of these collaborations, McMahon and Quin concluded as follows:

It is more likely that parallel courses have emerged as a result of certain shared perceptions and assumptions which underpin the pedagogical decisions of media educators. The common conceptual denominator is the belief that the mass media should be studied within the larger socio-cultural framework in which it operates. This conviction has meant that critical methods derived from cultural studies are gaining popularity as a worthwhile approach to media education.⁶⁶

As for the local leaders themselves, by 1978, both had moved from being the media advisory team at North Lake Senior High School (SHS) media centre, along with Steve Daymond, to the central office at the Department of Education. Their role there was to continue to support teachers of media in their teaching in schools more broadly across the State. Now, though, they had less autonomy than previously, as they were subjected to the structures and regulations of a bureaucratic government body, including working under a line manager, who was then the Education Superintendent.⁶⁷

Nevertheless, McMahon, Quin, and a team of teachers continued to write the subject newsletter, which by 1978 was entitled *Little Aidem*, to support teachers. The advisory team also continued to operate the mobile media resource available to schools for hands-on media production. It now came complete with advisory team visit support:

The media studies officers Barrie McMahon, Robyn Quin and Steve Daymond also assisted with repair of super 8 and 35mm cameras (through Public Works), curriculum support notes, equipment loans for pilot primary schools, advice on media programmes 1-12, small tv studios for loan, mobile media resources- caravan on site, advice on media in other curriculum activities, publications- primary media resource book, media

⁶⁵ Quin and Quin, *Media education: the development of media education in Western Australian schools*. p. 110

⁶⁶ McMahon and Quin, *Media studies in schools- into the next era*. p. 4

⁶⁷ Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?* p. 222

conventions, media message, Aidem, equipment loan kits for media 11/12 classes, school advisory visits.⁶⁸

Further, the centrality of the media advisory personnel, and in particular the Senior Education Officer (McMahon) to the definition of subject knowledge, its implementation and the on-going operation of media studies in schools was recognised by the then superintendent of media studies, in a letter to the Director of Schools, where she said that it was the Senior Education Officer who assumed responsibility for “at once curriculum development and implementation, advisory and resource allocation roles.”⁶⁹

By 1980, media studies was offered as a lower school (for Years 8 to 10) subject option in many metropolitan high schools in Western Australia and by the end of the decade it was firmly established in many Western Australian secondary schools.⁷⁰ The decade also saw the expansion and consolidation of media studies’ upper school programs across the State. Additionally, the associated syllabus underwent major revisions. Moreover, the influence of the subject also spread to other parts of the curriculum. For example, the study of media texts was given a place in the new upper school Year 11 and Year 12 English courses developed in 1984 and in the new lower school (Years 8 to Year 10) English ‘Unit Curriculum’ courses developed in 1987.⁷¹

The shift noted above that took place in relation to English was because of a desire to introduce students to previously ignored knowledge and abilities based on popular culture that had been resisted by conservative forces for many years. Not all were happy though. A controversial policy decision to include non-print texts in the upper school English syllabus

⁶⁸ B. McMahon, Media Studies 1982, *Little Aidem* [*Aidem* changed its name to *Little Aidem* when it changed to a smaller A5 sized format. In 1984 the name changed once again, and it became *Little Media*]

⁶⁹ Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?* p. 225. [Personal Communication between R. Quin and M. Nadebaum, Director of Schools].

⁷⁰ Quin and Quin, Media education: the development of media education in Western Australian schools. p. 118

⁷¹ Education Department of Western Australia (EDWA), *The Unit Curriculum Introduction* (Perth, Western Australia: EDWA, 1987).

saw extreme reactions from teachers of both media studies and English. Some media studies teachers saw it as a victory and an acknowledgement of the value of media literacy through its inclusion as part of the high status and compulsory subject English. Many teachers of English, on the other hand, saw it as a threat to the nature of their subject that had been structurally stable in Western Australian schools for half a century. Overall, the conflict that manifested itself was an example that illustrated Goodson's hypothesis of school subjects being contested social phenomena.⁷²

Influences on media studies curriculum development in Western Australia

In regard to the influence of theoretical advancements, the 1980s and 1990s was an era when there was a shift in the growing research field of media studies, that was closely linked to international cultural and semiotic theoretical developments. Whilst the previous curriculum focus internationally was primarily on the individual as a consumer,⁷³ Aronowitz and Giroux described the change that took place as one which reflected the 'science of the text.'⁷⁴ In other words, this was the time when the analysis of media images became a core focus, and methodology was explored and developed to provide a framework for engaging in the related critical process. In the curriculum at least, 'learning by doing' now took a back seat. Theorists in the 1980s and 1990s emphasised the need for the study of popular culture, stating that it:

needs to become a serious object of study in the official curriculum. This can be done by treating popular culture either as a distinct object of study within particular academic disciplines such as media studies, or by drawing upon the resources it produces for engaging various aspects of the official curriculum.⁷⁵

The influence of that emphasis was evident in the 'Unit Curriculum' for lower school (Year 8 to 10) in Western Australia implemented in 1987, with a whole unit devoted to popular culture,

⁷² I. F. Goodson, *School Subjects and Curriculum Change: Studies in Curriculum History* (Washington, US: Falmer Press, 1993).

⁷³ Quin, *Media studies: finding an identity*. p. 98.

⁷⁴ Aronowitz and Giroux, *The Punishment of Disciplines: Cultural Studies and the Transformation of Legitimate Knowledge*.p. 142.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* p. 120.

entitled ‘Popular Culture: Video Games to TV Game Shows 4.3,’⁷⁶ as well as numerous references being made to popular culture throughout all of the units.

Significant too, in the early 1980s, was the establishment of the Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM WA) to support media studies teachers in the State. That was a WA branch of similar existing professional associations around the nation, that consisted of volunteer teachers of media. Some of its functions included organising social events for teachers of media, to provide representation to the government on curriculum changes, to produce newsletters and running professional development programs for teachers on media skills.

By the mid-1980s, the focus of the media courses in WA had also shifted away from assumptions about the ‘direct influence’ on audiences, “using a sort of stimulus-response model with heavily behaviourist overtones, (with) media content serving as a trigger”,⁷⁷ to a framework “which drew much more on what can be broadly defined as the ‘ideological’ role of the media,”⁷⁸ and which reflected developing semiotic theory that was led by Hall, Fiske, Masterman, and others.⁷⁹ In general, what was emphasized was “the influence of the audience being more subversive, indirect, even invisible; an emphasis of the notion of semiotics through which messages were mediated to audiences through the medium”; and “audiences as complex, active and inconsistent.”⁸⁰ Hall’s work at the Birmingham Centre of Cultural Studies also challenged the theory of media texts as transparent bearers of meaning central in McLuhan’s

⁷⁶ Education Department of Western Australia (EDWA) *The Unit Curriculum: Media Studies*, 2nd ed. (Perth, Western Australia: EDWA, 1987). p. 33.

⁷⁷ S. Hall et al., *Culture, Media, Language : Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79* (London, UK: Routledge, 2015) p. 104.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* J. Fiske et al., *Key Concepts in Communication Studies* (New York, US: Routledge, 1983); Masterman, *Teaching the Media*.

⁸⁰ S. Hall, Encoding and Decoding, *Culture Media Language* (London, UK: Hutchinson 1980). pp. 128-139.

concept of the “medium is the message”. Rather, what was emphasised were the sign systems through which mass mediated meanings reached audiences.⁸¹

The media curriculum for schools in Western Australia was shaped by the changes in semiotic theory just noted, commencing with the review undertaken of the upper school media studies syllabus in 1980. While the 1981 revised syllabus that followed retained all the key features of the first syllabus, it also introduced a shift in some theoretical perspectives. The linear communication model central to the curriculum of the earlier era (sender-message-medium-receiver), in which the audience was viewed as homogenous and passive, was abandoned in favour of Hall’s ‘encoding and decoding’ model of communication, which placed more emphasis on the media being an agent in the construction of social reality and the audience being an active participant in their construction of meaning.⁸² It omitted reference to moral discrimination, and stated that students were required to develop an “analytical approach to sending and receiving messages, particularly with regard to the myth of objectivity.”⁸³ The latter section of this sentence reflected Barthes’ theoretical developments at the time. It also represented a distinct shift from a subjective analytical approach to an objective one.

A further revision of the syllabus in 1983 reflected another shift towards the media theory being developed by Hall and others. The organising categories of ‘media environment’, ‘effects on audience’, (linear) ‘communication chain’ and ‘techniques’ were replaced by a new conception of the communication chain as being unidirectional instead of linear, as reflected in such statements as the ‘construction of messages (sender)’, ‘the way that they function (message)’, the ‘nature of each medium (medium)’ and ‘the effect upon the audience

⁸¹ Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?* p. 200.

⁸² Quin, *A genealogy of media studies; Quin, Media studies: finding an identity.*

⁸³ Board of Secondary Education (BSE), *Media studies, Certificate of Secondary Education (General Subjects) Manual* (Perth, Western Australia: BSE, 1982). p. 161.

(receiver).'⁸⁴ That shift reflected in particular an influence of the UK cultural studies notion of reading audiences as active in their reception of media messages.⁸⁵

Another inclusion was the notion of the media as a cultural agent and that audiences are members of a shared culture or sub-culture. On that, it was stated:

Students should be able to identify the effects of a particular medium upon existing cultures; effects of existing cultures on a particular medium; pressures within existing cultures and sub-cultures which affect the way in which each medium is used.⁸⁶

Here too, was an acknowledgement of Hall's work on semiotic theory and audience reception, and Barthes position on popular culture.⁸⁷

A further influence of Barthes was demonstrated in a shift in McMahon's thinking about image analysis and audience as demonstrated in a 1983 article in *Little Aidem*:

This edition of *Little Aidem* concentrates upon photography- not just practical aspects, because these are better covered in other publications and in practical workshop sessions. Instead, issues of function and analysis are addressed...

The issues raised are a little complex, but the principles are teachable. In order to illustrate this, some of the theories have been broken down into simple student exercises... The catalysts that have been chosen to stimulate thought about the significance of the photograph are the précis of the views of Roland Barthes on photography and an interview with noted documentary photographer and educator, Ron McCormick.⁸⁸

In another article, he went on to recognise a challenge to his conceptual understanding outlined in his earlier textbook for media teachers, namely, *Media Conventions*,⁸⁹ "The recent ideas of Barthes contrast markedly with the approach towards photographic analysis that is

⁸⁴ Board of Secondary Education (BSE), Media studies, *Certificate of Secondary Education (General Subjects) Manual* (Perth, Western Australia: BSE, 1984). p. 170.

⁸⁵ Hall et al., *Culture, Media, Language : Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79*. p. 170.

⁸⁶ BSE, *Media Studies*. (1984). p. 170.

⁸⁷ Hall, S. Introduction to media studies at the centre. *Culture Media Language*. pp. 117-121; R. Barthes, *S/z* (Paris, France: Editions du Seuil, 1976).

⁸⁸ B. McMahon, Photographs- theories and activities, *Little Aidem*, vol. 4, p. 1.

⁸⁹ B. McMahon et al., *Media Conventions: A Teachers Resource Book for Secondary Media Studies*, (Perth, Western Australia: EDWA, 1986).

contained in *Media Conventions* by switching greater attention to the role of the spectator, he has provided a path for further exploration.”⁹⁰

Barthe’s notion of the myth is seen too in the development of the Unit Curriculum program written for lower school students, entitled, ‘Film, Television and Photo Documentary 5.1.’ Stated under the heading ‘Social Construct’, is “Recognise that the high credibility that is given to documentaries means that they are significant myth makers and myth carriers”⁹¹. Myth too was the dominant focus of the unit ‘Film, Television and Print Fiction 5.2’. Stated on that in the accompanying notes for teachers, was that “an understanding of the concept of myth is crucial to the development of unit objectives.”⁹² At the same time, there was no change in the 1983 WA revised media studies program on practical production and learning by doing. On that, it was stated that “students should study this subject by the ‘learning by doing’ method rather than by the ‘viewing and analysis’ method, although both should be experienced.”⁹³

Another individual who had a significant influence on media studies’ course developments in Western Australia was Len Masterman, a British media studies academic at the Nottingham University in the UK. Through his connection with McMahon, who was one of the key writers for the WA media studies curriculum and the assessment materials, as well as the local textbooks written for the courses, they shared teaching resources.⁹⁴ Moreover, his popular textbook, *Teaching About Television*, published in 1980 had a profound effect on McMahon’s understanding of the media and how to teach about it.⁹⁵

Aronowitz and Giroux’ notion on the effects of representation and stereotypes of subcultural groups in the mass media was also influential, with new content written into the

⁹⁰ B. McMahon, Photographs- A Variety of Approaches, *Little Aidem*, vol. 4, (1983). p. 4.

⁹¹ EDWA, *The Unit Curriculum: Media Studies*. p. 36

⁹² *Ibid.* p. 39.

⁹³ BSE, *Media Studies*. (1984). p. 169.

⁹⁴ B. McMahon, Letters to the Editor, *Little Aidem*, vol. 1 (1982) p. 8.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

course, in a recognition of the power of media representations to exploit and distort depictions of minorities and the powerless in society.⁹⁶ McMahon responded positively in *Little Media*, stating:

In this issue there are a number of articles on the subject of 'representation' in the media. This term is cropping up frequently in literature on media theory and is becoming an increasingly important concept in the study of mass media... it is intended that *Little Media* will provide a resource for teachers who will be teaching the revised upper school courses in 1985.⁹⁷

By now, though, others had been urging caution on other fronts. For example, a Western Australian teacher of media, Bob Ferguson, criticised the introduction of portapak in schools. These, he said, changed the way students produced films, and led to a reduction in shooting time. The result, he added, was low quality productions in which "the camera was often 'squirted' at its subject and the dizzy, boring and incoherent results thus obtained could be justified as experimentation."⁹⁸ The time devoted to theory relative to the amount of time devoted to production also became a matter for debate in media studies circles in the State, again illustrating Goodson and Marsh's hypothesis that school subjects are contested social phenomena.⁹⁹

Textbooks and other teacher support materials

In a 2011 interview, McMahon reflected on how he and Robyn Quin became to write textbooks to support teachers teaching Western Australian media courses:

At the time that Robyn Quin came to join me in 1981, we found that there were no materials around for teachers, so Robyn and I started writing books. The Education Department wouldn't do the publishing, so we published them ourselves. The first of a dozen or so books that we put out gave teachers some ideas about how to approach media education; the last resources we wrote was in 2010 on multimedia/social media. These resources are characterized by giving the teachers structures to work with, because I think that's the key in education, to give kids some kind of scaffolds. Kids know about soap operas, and they know more about computer games than I do. But

⁹⁶ Aronowitz and Giroux, *The Punishment of Disciplines: Cultural Studies and the Transformation of Legitimate Knowledge*. p. 157.

⁹⁷ B. McMahon et al. Special stereotypical issue, *Little Media*, vol. 4, (1984). p. 1.

⁹⁸ R Ferguson, Practical work and pedagogy, *Screen Education*, vol. 38, no. 1 (1981). pp. 41-55.

⁹⁹ Goodson and Marsh, *Studying School Subjects: A Guide*.

what they don't have are the scaffolds, the structures of how to make sense of it all, and that's the job of the teacher to do that.¹⁰⁰

The first textbook they published, which was in 1984, was titled, *Exploring Images*.¹⁰¹ It was designed for lower and upper school students, and it provided them with an Aronowitz and Giroux-type methodological framework for interpreting images. In the introduction, they stated that “the book aims to give teachers and students a methodological structure with which to analyse images.”¹⁰² McMahon and Quin, acknowledged the guidance and constructive criticism of the British media scholar and cultural theorist, John Fiske in the introduction of the textbook.¹⁰³ Shortly beforehand, Fiske had taken up a position at the Western Australian Institute of Technology (WAIT) which later became Curtin University. He was a pioneer of one of the first cultural studies programs in Australia, teaching subjects on cultural studies theory, television, and popular culture. Indeed, in drawing on Saussure, Althusser, Barthes, and Levi-Strauss for models of textual analysis, he and his team of academics were instrumental in developing not only a Western Australian, but also a national cultural studies identity. For example, in establishing the *Australian Journal of Cultural Studies*, he provided a publishing outlet directed to an international market, that had been especially difficult for Australian academics to engage with up until that point.¹⁰⁴

Returning to McMahon and Quin's 1986 textbook, *Real Images*, written for senior media studies students, they explained the shift in understanding upon which it was based:

¹⁰⁰ McMahon, *Voices of Media Literacy*. [Robyn Quin joined Barrie McMahon at the Media Studies department at the Education Department in 1981].

¹⁰¹ B. McMahon and R. Quin, *Exploring Images* (East Perth, Western Australia: Bookland Pty Ltd. 1984).

¹⁰² *Ibid.* p. 7

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* p. 5

¹⁰⁴ G. Turner, John Fiske and the building of cultural studies, *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 25, no. 6 (2021). pp. 3-13. [Moreover, by the mid-1980s, Western Australia became home to further internationally respected luminaries of media and cultural studies, such as John Hartley, who co-authored *Reading Television* with Fiske, who joined Peter Jeffrey and Irma Whitford at Murdoch University. These academics also had a significant effect on the approach adopted to the teaching of media studies in secondary schools].

The suggested approach [to analysis] is designed to develop in students a method of film analysis that will be valuable throughout life. As technical innovations occur or as content changes, they will thus be able to understand the developments. The authors believe that some of the historical, technical and classification approaches to film that have had currency have failed to do this. The best of the approaches have developed in students a love of the art, a limited understanding of the language, but little comprehension of the link between the 'language' of film/television and the relevance of these media to society. In this book, this link is seen as crucial. We seek to develop the understanding that film and television are systems of communication and that as such they interact with society- reinforcing values, developing new values, and helping to shape the society's understanding of itself and the larger world. That is, film and television are seen as carriers of ideology.¹⁰⁵

On the broader front, however, another submission made to the Tertiary Admissions Examinations Committee (TAEC) to attain tertiary entrance status for media studies was, as in 1977, rejected. This time the argument was that what was proposed was too similar to a newly proposed English syllabus, except in relation to practical production. To that was added a view that the practical production aspect of the course was not appropriate for a tertiary entrance subject.¹⁰⁶ Accordingly, the success of furthering the media literacy movement through the inclusion of media texts in the English curriculum was to the detriment of the development of media studies as a tertiary entrance subject.

Changes in the content of the syllabus for media studies to providing more challenging and complex material for teachers to teach was also not received favourably by some teachers of media.¹⁰⁷ One objection was to the use of "such (unheard of in 1976) concepts as narrative, rhetoric, myth and metonymy."¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, other teachers of media studies seeking to have the subject recognised for university admission continued to work to enhance its academic status. On that, one of the first media teachers for the early courses interviewed by Quin in 1999 reflected as follows:

¹⁰⁵ B. McMahon and R. Quin, *Real Images- Film and Television*, 1st ed. (Melbourne, Australia: Macmillan Pty Ltd. 1986). p. 1.

¹⁰⁶ Board of Secondary Education (BSE), *Minutes of the Tertiary Admissions Examination Committee 26 August 1983* (Perth, Western Australia: BSE, 1983).

¹⁰⁷ Quin, A genealogy of media studies. p. 110.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* p. 111; Quin, Media studies: finding an identity.

I always had the feeling that there was always a need to justify ourselves, very much with the administration of the school and very much with other teachers. We were trying to justify our own existence by trying to get some sort of tertiary recognition of the course so there was a lot of rigour in our examination of the theoretical basis of media studies.¹⁰⁹

The cause of advocates was also not helped by some newly graduated teachers of media from university with a background in semiotics, communication theories, cultural theory, and textual analysis¹¹⁰ who were wishing to embrace textual analysis as the preferred approach and others who had been teaching for a long time preferring the learning by doing approach.

Not having tertiary entrance status also meant that media studies as a school subject was subject to minimal accountability as there were no external examinations. Also, as the media teacher was often the only one in the school teaching in the field, there were no heads of department. Accordingly, there was no mechanism to ensure that teachers adhered to the requirements of the syllabus. Consequently, media production supplemented occasionally by textual analysis continued to dominate classroom practice. ATOM WA though, continued its tradition of providing professional development in the form of practical production skills, and emphasising and celebrating students' practical work through film festivals.¹¹¹

Cynicism was also exhibited by some media teachers regarding a developing intellectualisation of the curriculum. That was reflected in *Little Media* and the ATOM WA newsletters. Through those avenues, writers regularly joked about the imposition of a curriculum shift and media teachers' aversion to cultural studies and academic discourse. For example, 'Alternative Media Studies Examination' questions of a satirical nature were outlined in the President's report. An example is as follows:

Alternative Media Studies Examination 1987

¹⁰⁹ Quin, A genealogy of media studies. p. 112. [Interview with Warren, one of the first media studies teachers in Western Australia, interviewed by Robyn Quin in 1999].

¹¹⁰ Quin and Quin, Media education: the development of media education in Western Australian schools.

¹¹¹ Quin, A genealogy of media studies. p. 113.

- Account for the lack of reference to contemporary alienation in Playschool.¹¹²
- Write notes on the following:
 - a) the codes and conventions of contemporary French cinema
 - b) whether George Negus wears a wig.¹¹³

Nevertheless, shifts continued to take place. For example, in 1986 there was a major rewrite of the upper school media studies syllabus. And, for the first time, it was split into Year 11 and Year 12 discrete areas of study, following the recommendations of the McGaw report.¹¹⁴

The structure of the two new courses of study was based on an emphasis on the mass media as an agent in the construction of social reality and the audience as an active participant in the construction of meaning. For the first time, too, it was stated that ‘computer mediated communication’ and video games should be included as additional media forms to be analysed.¹¹⁵ Additionally, the concept of realism was introduced, with the Year 12 course outline stating that “students will have the ability to identify the extent to which narrative contributes to the illusion of reality.”¹¹⁶ Also, the Year 11 course outline stated that “students will have the ability to identify the symbols used for particular stereotype typification”¹¹⁷ and that for the Year 12 course it said they should, “identify the specific ways in which the codes are used in a rhetorical form to elicit a specific response.”¹¹⁸

A methodological shift was also evident in the upper school courses. Whilst the 1983 lower school course emphasised learning by doing, the 1987 upper school courses reflected a more balanced approach between production and theory. “The aim”, it was stated “is to teach

¹¹² End of year examination: alternative media studies examination 1987, *ATOM News*, November edition, (1986). p. 18.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* p. 18.

¹¹⁴ McGaw, B. *Assessment in the Upper Secondary School in Western Australia: Report on the Ministerial Working Party on School Certification and Tertiary Admission Procedures- McGaw Report*. (Perth, Western Australia: Western Australian Government, 1984).

¹¹⁵ Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?*

¹¹⁶ Secondary Education Authority (SEA), *Media Studies. Year 12 Syllabuses: Certificate of Secondary Education Accredited Courses* (Perth, Western Australia: SEA, 1987).

¹¹⁷ Secondary Education Authority (SEA), *Media Studies. Year 11 Syllabuses: Certificate of Secondary Education Accredited Courses* (Perth, Western Australia: Secondary Education Authority, 1987).

¹¹⁸ SEA, *Media Studies. Year 12 Syllabuses: Certificate of Secondary Education Accredited Courses*.

the understandings outlined in the course. Student activity, whether production or analysis orientated, is a valid method of achieving this aim.”¹¹⁹ Also, the emphasis on media theory was evident in the general aims of the syllabus where it was stated that, “media studies aims to increase student understanding of how the media work, how they produce meaning, how they are organised, and how they go about the business of constructing reality.”¹²⁰

In the period between the 1982 version of the media studies syllabus and the introduction of the Unit Curriculum for lower secondary school in 1986, the Western Australian Department of Education advisory officers continued to write articles for *Little Media* and produce other support materials to assist teachers in their understanding of the theoretical shifts in media studies being required of them. Amongst the topics presented were stereotypes and representation, mythology, race and representation, cultural representation, myth in Australian film, sexism in the media, sport and racial politics, issues and ethics, representation of Aborigines, genre, narrative, media as constructions, and television semiotics.¹²¹

Those who designed the media studies syllabi at the time, which involved an inclusion of more complex theories and language, had the intention of consolidating media studies as a discrete subject with its own specialist content and vocabulary. Young contends that moves like that model high status subjects which seek to emphasise their abstractness from everyday

¹¹⁹ SEA, *Media Studies. Year 11 Syllabuses: Certificate of Secondary Education Accredited Courses*. p. 177; SEA, *Media Studies. Year 12 Syllabuses: Certificate of Secondary Education Accredited Courses*. p. 158.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 156

¹²¹ B. McMahon et al. Special archetypal issue, *Little Aidem*, vol. 1 (1982); B. McMahon, R. Quin, and D. Price, Special daguerreotypal issue, *Little Media*, vol. 4 (1983); B. McMahon and R. Quin, Race and representation, *Little Media*, vol. 3 (1984); McMahon et al. Special stereotypical issue, *Little Media*, vol. 4 (1984); B. McMahon and R. Quin, Cultural representation, *Little Media*, vol. 2 (1985); B. McMahon and R. Quin, Myth in Australian film, *Little Media*, vol. 5 (1985); B. McMahon et al. Special construction issue, *Little Media*, vol. 3 (1986); B. McMahon et al., Special issues issue, *Little Media*, vol. 4 (1986); B. McMahon and R. Quin, Representation and stereotyping, *Little Media*, vol. 5 (1986); B. McMahon, Robyn Quin, and Rod Quin, *ATOM News*, August issue, (1986).

life.¹²² Cogitating that also brings to mind once again Goodson's view that the evolution of a school subject from a utilitarian to a more academic version is not uncommon and becomes an externally examinable subject to gain academic respectability.¹²³ However Goodson and Marsh also contend such a move can also be a source of contested social phenomena.¹²⁴ That was certainly the case in Western Australia with tensions between teachers of media building regarding the emphasis of practical and theoretical pedagogy in their classrooms.

Further revisions were made to the media studies upper school syllabus in 1986. In it, a greater emphasis than previously was placed on the study of codes and conventions. That reflected new influential media texts written by local academics, including Fiske's *Introduction to Communication Studies* (1982)¹²⁵ and Hartley's *Understanding News* (1982).¹²⁶ In addition, a strong emphasis on the concept of representation was a new addition in the further revised 1987 syllabus.¹²⁷ That was exemplified by the inclusion of a section in the syllabus titles, of 'Value Systems of the Constructions', which included the following sub-headings:

- Representation of authority figures and heroes
- The function of connotation and myth in the representations
- The value systems associated with the representations
- Dominant cultural and sub-cultural factors affecting receptivity of the audience

Reference to that change was made in *Little Media*:

In this issue there are a number of articles on the subject of 'representation' in the media. This term is cropping up frequently in literature on media theory and is becoming an increasingly important concept in the study of mass media... it is intended that *Little Media* will provide a resource for teachers who will be teaching the revised upper school courses in 1985.¹²⁸

¹²² M. F. D. Young, The schooling of science, in G. Whitty and M. F. D. Young, (eds.) *Explorations in the Politics of School Knowledge* (Driffield, UK: Nafferton Books, 1976), pp. 47-61.

¹²³ Goodson, *School Subjects and Curriculum Change: Studies in Curriculum History*.

¹²⁴ Goodson and Marsh, *Studying School Subjects: A Guide*.

¹²⁵ J. Fiske, *Introduction to Communication Studies* (London, UK: Methuen, 1982).

¹²⁶ J. Hartley, *Understanding News* (London, UK: Routledge, 1988); Quin, Media studies: finding an identity. p. 98.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ McMahon et al. Special stereotypical issue. p. 1.

Additionally, a media studies conference was held in Western Australia for the first time in Western Australia in 1986. The three guest speakers, Annette Kuhn, Trevor Barr and John Tulloch were all media theorists instead of media skills' practitioners.

Kuhn was a feminist author on cinema, Barr was an expert on new technologies, and Tulloch was a researcher of audiences. Local academics Hartley and Fiske also held workshops on analysing television drama and documentary, film genre, and representation. The conference proceedings received mixed reviews from the 90 teachers who attended, reflecting the growing conflict between those teachers preferring a predominant practical focus, and those wanting to shift media studies to a greater focus on theory, and therefore gain tertiary entrance status.¹²⁹

In 1987, a Bachelor of Arts in Media Studies degree was introduced at the Western Australian College of Advanced Education.¹³⁰ Subsequently, a shift took place in the authority aimed at moving decisions about subject knowledge away from schoolteachers and towards university academics.¹³¹ Additionally, students could study to become teachers of media studies by enrolling in a Diploma of Teaching (Media Studies) which meant that they could come to teaching with a first degree in media studies. In these courses, students studied media production, analysis and the methods for teaching media studies to secondary school students.

¹³² As a result, a significant change occurred in the teaching of the media studies course in schools, from being a subject focused on encouraging 'learning by doing' to a more theoretically dense one with concepts drawn from cultural studies and literary theory that were not a part of the earlier course structure or focus.¹³³

¹²⁹ Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?* p. 228; R. Quin, State conference report, *ATOM News*, August edition, (1986); J. McMahon, Letter to the editor, *ATOM News*, May edition, (1986).

¹³⁰ Quin and Quin, Media education: the development of media education in Western Australian schools. [In footnote on p. 118].

¹³¹ Quin, Media studies: finding an identity. p. 99.

¹³² R. Quin, Media courses at WACAE, *ATOM News*, May edition. (1986).

¹³³ Quin, Media studies: finding an identity. p. 99.

The Education Department's *Better Schools in Western Australia Report*¹³⁴ of 1987 also had an influence due to recommendations that led to the subsequent abolition of subject advisory positions. For teachers of media studies, the service had been a valued asset for promoting the development and popularity of the subject amongst them. Moreover, failure to have it recognised as a tertiary entrance accredited subject left no option but for the subject to be included in the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) implemented in the mid-1990s.¹³⁵ The suite of subjects written for that were for students who sought alternatives to TEE (Tertiary Entrance Examination) courses.¹³⁶ Yet, the uptake of upper school media studies by secondary schools in both regional and metropolitan areas expanded in 1985 in accordance with the McGaw recommendations to 'open up' their upper school curriculum.¹³⁷

In 1987, media studies was piloted as one of the new subjects included in the new 'Unit Curriculum' developed for secondary schools, which replaced the Achievement Certificate. The overall development was a response to the recommendations of the Beazley and McGaw reports that a broad agenda for curriculum change be adopted in Western Australia.¹³⁸ The curriculum was designed to assist schools in making changes to increase the flexibility of the curriculum.¹³⁹ Pilot schools included Balga Senior High School (SHS), Kent Street SHS, Meekatharra District High School, St Stephen's School Duncraig, Sacred Heart College Sorrento, Safety Bay SHS and Woodvale SHS. There, the curriculum included a choice from 300, 40-hour units¹⁴⁰ to offer under the following broad categories: the study of English, languages and communication, mathematics, personal and vocational education, physical

¹³⁴ Ministry of Education (MOE), *Better Schools in Western Australia: A Programme for Improvement* (Perth, Western Australia: MOE, 1987).

¹³⁵ Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?*

¹³⁶ Curriculum Council, *Introduction to the Common Assessment Framework*. (Perth, Western Australia: Curriculum Council, 1998).

¹³⁷ B. McMahon, *Around the Schools, Little Media*, vol 4. (1984). p. 3; McGaw, *McGaw Report*.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*; Marsh, *Putting the Beazley Report into action: the unit curriculum*.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*. p. 1

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*. p. 7

education, practical and creative arts, science and technology and social studies.¹⁴¹ Media studies came under the category of English, languages, and communication. Units offered in each category were developed as ‘stages of progress’ from Stage 1 to Stage 6, which students were to progress through during Years 8 to 10.¹⁴²

The following reference to a shift in theoretical understanding on media studies was made in the 1987 Unit Curriculum media studies rationale:

These communication systems are seen as being the most significant forms of communication in modern society. In order to understand their impact, it is necessary to understand the languages of the mass media. This involves understanding the links between the languages and the cultures which generate them, the economic factors which affect the production or reception of mass media messages. The latter involves audience perception of both surface and deeper (cultural) meaning associated with the mass media messages.

The organising pedagogy for the study focuses upon the nature of communication, the codes and conventions associated with the language systems, the narrative patterns that are developed and the social implications of the messages.¹⁴³

However, little to no support was provided for teachers. Indeed, that situation was justified in the introduction to the syllabus, where it was stated that “teachers using the centrally developed units will not be required to undertake further curriculum development.”¹⁴⁴ Rather, it was expected that teachers would learn on their own how to use the new curriculum and schools were left to manage the implementation.

Western Australian teachers of media though, were unhappy and requested further material be provided by the Ministry of Education.¹⁴⁵ A Media Studies: Unit Curriculum Teacher Support Document was produced as one response:

After the introduction of Media Studies Unit Curriculum, many teachers requested support materials to assist them with the implementation of the new course. Australian

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 7

¹⁴² EDWA, *The Unit Curriculum Introduction*. p. 4

¹⁴³ EDWA, *The Unit Curriculum: Media Studies*.

¹⁴⁴ EDWA, *The Unit Curriculum Introduction*. p. 7

¹⁴⁵ L. Yates et al. *Ministry of Education (1988 to 1994) Western Australia*, Curriculum Policies Archive (2017). <https://scpp.esrc.unimelb.edu.au/biogs/E000027b.htm>.

[The Department of Education in Western Australia changed name between 1988 and 1994 to the Ministry of Education].

Teachers of Media (WA) responded to the need in late 1988 by successfully applying for a grant from the Ministry of Education to commence work on this support document.¹⁴⁶

Relatedly, it was stated in the document that the activities and sample strategies provided in it were largely written by practicing teachers who had taught the new curriculum and had found success with them. It was added that “a large percentage of the writers decided to feature a ‘hands-on’ approach to the interpreting of the objectives. They have done so to demonstrate that all units allow for a practical approach.” This may be to reflect the requests made by teachers.

A textbook written by McMahon and Quin for lower secondary school students later, in 1988, and entitled *Meet the Media*, also demonstrated the theoretical shift that had taken place in understanding of communication due to the work of Hall and others at this time. In page 11, the basic linear communication model was presented.¹⁴⁷ Then, on page 13, the authors stated:

The problem with the ‘sender, message, medium, receiver model’ is not that it is wrong, but that it does not tell us enough. Firstly, it does not tell us how communication occurs or in this case, why it failed to occur. Secondly, it suggests that communication is mechanical- that you just feed the information in at one end and out comes the meaning at the other... We have already seen that communication depends upon agreeing on the meanings of the symbols used in the communication process.

A better model of communication is one that takes into account the use of symbols and the meanings that people attach to them.¹⁴⁸

Moreover, in the conclusion to the first chapter, entitled ‘What is Communication?’, amongst the points made were that ‘symbols have a surface and deeper meaning’ and ‘the meaning of each symbol depends upon the culture that uses the symbol.’¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Ministry of Education (MOE) and Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM WA), *Media Studies: Unit Curriculum: Teacher Support Document* (Perth, Western Australia: MOE and ATOM WA, 1990). p. ii.

¹⁴⁷ B. McMahon and R. Quin, *Meet the Media*, 1st ed. (Melbourne, Australia: MacMillan Pty Ltd. 1988). p. 11.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 13

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p. 14

Each chapter in the new textbook was based on the following framework offered for deconstructing various media and genres:

1. What products do the media offer us?
2. How are these messages or products constructed? What codes do they use? How do we make sense of (decode) these messages?
3. At whom are these messages directed? Do we all make the same messages or do the meanings vary?
4. What effects do the mass media have on us? What are the surface and deeper meanings of the products or messages they offer us? Are the meanings important? Do they affect the way we live and think? Can the media tell us anything about our world?¹⁵⁰

Again, these questions reflected the influence of Hall's encoding and decoding theory, and an associated emphasis on audience reception, on narrative, on codes, and on conventions.

Those theoretical shifts had already been outlined in the new media syllabi developed in the 1980s.

Observing the changes between the first edition of the authors' textbook *Real Images* for upper school students published in 1986, and that of 1995, is instructive. In the introduction to both, the authors stated:

We seek to develop the understanding that film and television are systems of communication and that as such they interact with society- reinforcing values, developing new values, and helping to shape the society's understanding of itself and the larger world.¹⁵¹

An emphasis on 'ideology' in the 1986 edition, influenced by the Karl Mannheimian approach, then followed:

Ideology is a word that is loaded with meaning. In popular parlance it is often used to denigrate the belief system underlying a hostile political viewpoint. This book will use the more Mannheimian approach, which defines ideology as the dominant belief system of a culture (including one's own). It is also recognised that ideology is closely linked

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p. 11.

¹⁵¹ McMahon and Quin, *Real Images- Film and Television*. 1st ed. p.1; B. McMahon and R. Quin, *Real Images- Film and Television*, 2nd ed. (South Melbourne, Australia: MacMillan Pty Ltd. 1995). p. 1.

with the means of production in a society and, most importantly, the means of production of the society's images of itself.¹⁵²

In the 1995 edition, however, the emphasis was thus:

The second edition places greater emphasis on audiences. It addresses the ways in which audiences make their meanings from texts according to the different frames of references they have. There is no monolithic ideology that envelopes all members of a community. Rather, audiences draw from a variety of experiences in order to make the meanings out of media texts.¹⁵³

Relatedly, whilst the influential theorists outlined in the 1986 edition included Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, John Fiske, Graeme Turner, Stuart Hall, Marshall McLuhan, and Len Masterman, those in the 1995 edition included Alvarado and Boyd-Barrett, Bazalgette and Buckingham, and the Ontario Ministry of Education *Media Literacy Guide* of 1989.¹⁵⁴

Approach to assessment

The assessment and grading approaches for the curriculum that was adopted demonstrated a shift from the norm-referenced assessment model of the Achievement Certificate to a standards-referenced approach. Under the former, students' work was graded in relation to the performance of others.¹⁵⁵ It was concluded, however, that it did not effectively communicate the standards of achievement to students, parents and employers, nor provide students with sufficient incentive to achieve at their best.

The same types of assessments, that included tests and assignments, was continued for the new system. However, the method of assigning grades changed to using letter grades A, B, C, D and F, which reflected predetermined standards of work made available by the School Education Authority.¹⁵⁶ The Common Assessment Framework (CAF), as described earlier in

¹⁵² McMahan and Quin, *Real Images- Film and Television*. (1986) p. 1; P. L. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality : A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1991); R. Williams, *Culture* (Glasgow, UK: Fontana, 1981).

¹⁵³ McMahan and Quin, *Real Images- Film and Television*. (1995). p. 1.

¹⁵⁴ Ontario Ministry of Education, *Media Literacy Resource Guide: Intermediate and Senior Divisions*.

¹⁵⁵ Education Department of Western Australia (EDWA), *The Unit Curriculum Assessment and Grading Procedures, Media Studies* (Perth, Western Australia: EDWA, 1987). p. 2.

¹⁵⁶ EDWA, *The Unit Curriculum Introduction*. p. 6.

this chapter, had a neoliberal focus that was designed to provide work-ready graduates, and it signalled a shift to an outcomes-based approach. In the Curriculum Framework, a stated outcome was a description of what students should know, understand, and value, as a result of being taught the learning program. The inclusion of key competencies recommended by the Mayer Committee¹⁵⁷ was required, along with statements of learning outcomes, which were tasks for measuring performance, and for ranking and grading. The performance for each outcome was defined through descriptions of very high (V), high (H), satisfactory (S) and not demonstrated (ND).

Moderation was provided by Curriculum Council officers through consensus meetings with teachers, and evidence of student achievement was gathered from a range of sources, including tests, assignments, projects, and examinations. All tasks were required to be completed for students to be eligible to successfully complete the course.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, sample tasks and exemplars were provided by the Curriculum Council to assist in understanding how to shape the tasks for classroom use, and how to assess the outcomes.

For media studies, two teachers were employed by the Curriculum Council to write the outcomes for the upper school media studies course. Their brief was to take the existing syllabus from 1986 and rewrite the same content according to the requirements of the new outcomes framework.¹⁵⁹ The product of their work for the Year 11 and 12 syllabus¹⁶⁰ are outlined on the following page:

¹⁵⁷ E. Mayer and Mayer Committee, *Mayer Report*.

¹⁵⁸ [The Secondary Education Authority was replaced by the Curriculum Council under the Curriculum Council Act in 1997]

¹⁵⁹ Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?*

¹⁶⁰ Curriculum Council, *Media Studies (Year 12) -E012* (Perth, Western Australia: Curriculum Council, 1999).

Media Studies CAF Course DO12 Year 11 Course Outcomes

1	Understand the components of mass communication and describe their function in media messages
2	Understand selection processes and how they create meaning in media texts
3	Understand patterns of construction in a range of media texts
4	Understand constraints operating in media production
5	Understand how values are presented by the media
6	Use a range of oral and written strategies to communicate media understandings
7	Demonstrate understanding of media language and production processes through the production of media messages
8	Contribute as a member of a team in media production

Media Studies CAF Course EO12 Year 12 Course Outcomes

1	Understand the specific characteristics of selected media
2	Understand patterns of construction in a range of media texts
3	Understand the effects of selection processes in mass media productions
4	Understand how value systems and contexts construct meaning in media texts
5	Understand external constraints which shape media production
6	Use a range of communication skills to present critical evaluation of media texts
7	Apply practical skills in one medium to demonstrate understanding of media constructs
8	Use communication and team skills to construct a media message

Relatedly, the revision of the course was not subject to critical review. Rather, it was simply a rewrite to what it replaced to conform to the model even though the latter was by then a decade old. Nonetheless, there were some additions to the description of outcomes. These represented conflicting media theories. For example, for Outcome 1 in the Year 12 syllabus, the following was stated:

Understand components of mass communication and their function in media messages.

This outcome is demonstrated when the student:

- Identifies the components of communication (i.e., sender, message, medium, and audience).
- Distinguishes between form and content of a medium.
- Recognises the complex nature of authorship.
- Recognises that audiences are active in creating meaning.

The first bullet point statement aligned with the linear communication model espoused by such earlier media theorists of the 1970s as Shannon and Weaver. Conversely, the third bullet point statement introduced a contrasting perspective, contending that authorship should be seen as multifaceted and contingent, emerging from a confluence of legislative, industrial, political, and social influences rather than being solely attributed to an individual, as proposed by scholars like Althusser, Barthes, and Hall.

A shift in who had authority in relation to school subjects

By the early nineties there was also of significant shift in the power relations in relation to course development for Western Australian secondary schools. The *Better Schools Report*¹⁶¹ recommended that support for subject development should be provided at a school level, thus reflecting the introduction of management and administrative practices from the corporate world. The central advisory office at the Department of Education diminished in importance and influence and ultimately closed, and the media studies advisory team there was dismantled, as discussed earlier in this chapter. The responsibility for syllabus development in media

¹⁶¹ Ministry of Education, *Better Schools in Western Australia: A Programme for Improvement*.

studies however, remained with a committee of the Secondary Education Authority. That consisted of teacher representatives from WA education system sectors, including government and non-government teachers, ATOM representation, and tertiary education establishment representatives.¹⁶² That group again made an attempt to secure accreditation for the subject to become a tertiary entrance subject, stating an intention to rewrite the courses to be framed in line with the emerging global functionalist discourse of education,¹⁶³ while having separate non-TEE and a TEE pathways.¹⁶⁴ Again the proposal was rejected, this time on the basis of it needing further work and elaboration. Once more, what is likely to have been significant is that production was again emphasised and valued over theory.

Following the closure of the central advisory office, teachers of media studies stepped up to fill the gap through working with ATOM WA, the professional association. The latter then began to grow in size and influence. Members took over the writing of the subject newsletter and secured positions on the Education Department syllabus committees for media studies. These changes in power relations resulted in changes taking place in the subject knowledge represented in media studies curriculum development. Consequently, the education bureaucrats essentially lost control over the development of the media studies curriculum to the subject teachers' association and classroom teachers.

Those media studies teachers who volunteered their time and exhibited a more open and accommodating stance when it came to syllabus development, were inclined towards embracing diverse and contradictory perspectives. That did not come as a surprise, given the time constraints they faced, often because of active engagement as full-time media teachers. By contrast, they found it challenging to keep abreast of the latest theoretical advancements.

¹⁶² Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?*

¹⁶³ Rizvi, *Internationalism of curriculum: a critical perspective.*

¹⁶⁴ Media Studies Syllabus Committee, *Media Studies Statement of Intent* (Perth, Western Australia: Secondary Education Authority, 1994). As cited in Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?*

As a result, the development of syllabus became a process of accumulation and integration of ideas. In that way, no new form of knowledge completely supplanted an existing one. Thus, in the resulting syllabi of the time there was an articulation of incongruent theories of communication.¹⁶⁵

Conclusion

This concern in this chapter was with the history of media studies, in secondary schools during the 1980s to 1990s with particular reference to the situation in Western Australia. First, the broad historical context was presented. Secondly, general developments in relation to media education were considered. The principal focus of the chapter, namely media education for secondary schools in WA during this period was addressed. The following chapter will explore the next era of study, from the years 2000 to 2014.

¹⁶⁵ Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?* p. 304

CHAPTER 6

2000 TO 2014: AN UNCEREMONIOUS REBIRTH

Introduction

The concern in this chapter is with the history of media studies in secondary schools from the year 2000 to 2014, with particular reference to Western Australia. First, the broad historical context is presented. Secondly, general developments in relation to media education are considered. The principal focus of the chapter, namely, media education for secondary schools in WA during this period, is then addressed.

The Broad Historical Context

A number of global and national events dominated the culture, the economy, and politics in Australia during the period between 2000 and 2014, some of which led to an incitement of fear and panic amongst the population. The nature of coverage through news media also ensured that a regular state of alarm existed in the minds of many Australians.¹

That included the reporting of the 11th of September attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York in 2001, that was claimed by the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda, and President Bush's consequential 'war on terror' which culminated in a strike on Afghanistan and with Australia joining American allies in the war that followed. Closer to home, in 2002, a bombing of tourists in Bali², Indonesia, by a terrorist cell whose members killed 88 Australians, exacerbated the fear of Muslim extremist threats, and strengthened Australian society's appetite for stricter border control. Similarly, bombings in London in 2005 by Islamic extremists saw an increase taking place in public debate about asylum seekers, with Australian

¹ D. Marr, *Panic* (Melbourne, Australia: Black Inc. 2013).

² [Bali is an extremely popular tourist destination for many Western Australians given its relatively close proximity to Perth].

society becoming increasingly fearful of refugees bringing different ideologies from other countries and threatening perceived safety and freedoms of the public.³

On the back of such world events, the hard stance taken by the Australian Coalition Government of the day on asylum seekers strengthened its majority in parliament following the national election of 2001. It did so again in 2004, influenced by a concurrent and ongoing threat of terrorism. At the time, violent conflict in the Middle East and Afghanistan brought waves of asylum seekers towards the Asia Pacific region and Indonesia refused to assist with their asylum seeking. Indonesian officials did, however, in return for financial payments, allow individuals to load the refugees onto boats to make their way into Australian waters.⁴

Australian refugee detention centres were created on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea as part of what was termed ‘the Pacific Solution.’ These became a symbol of an ongoing debate on border control and of the violation of the rights of refugees that caused a political headache internationally for the Australian government for many years. Further, hatred directed towards ‘outsiders’ culminated in the ‘Cronulla riots’ incited by a popular right-wing Sydney radio talkback presenter, Alan Jones, at the end of 2005.⁵ The resulting mob rampaging through a Sydney suburb led to the physical assault of many who looked middle Eastern. In all, thirty-one people were injured.

Up to 2007, significant changes took place in the government in Australia as well as a dramatic improvement in the economy. The latter development was cited as:

an economic expansion so sustained, so deep and widespread in its impact, so novel in its characteristics, that the lives of Australians, their hopes and plans, their work and their leisure, their wealth and incomes, the way they saw themselves and their country

³ M. Goot, The new millennium, in A. Bashford and S. Macintyre (edts.) *The Cambridge History of Australia: The Commonwealth of Australia* (New York, US: Cambridge University Press, 2013). pp. 187-211.

⁴ S. Macintyre, Outcomes, 1997-2019, *The Concise History of Australia*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020). pp. 287-328.

⁵ Marr, *Panic*.

and the ways it related to other countries, even the way they thought about their past, began to be changed by it.⁶

Until defeat in 2007, John Howard's Liberal-National Party Coalition government was kept afloat by that boom.

By then, Tony Abbott, the Howard Government's minister for employment services had instigated a 'reform' of unemployment schemes, and admonished unemployed people, stating that they should not be "snobbish"⁷ in the work they sought. Concurrently, he initiated a new scheme called *Work for the Dole*, requiring young people to complete unpaid community projects. The Labor Party, though, strengthened its leadership by appointing Kevin Rudd as leader in 2006. It then defeated the Federal Government in November 2007. However, the pace of economic growth soon slowed significantly, and the unemployment rate rose sharply.⁸

In 2010, Rudd was replaced by his deputy, Julia Gillard, who thus became Australia's first female prime minister. She led Labor to an election that same year that resulted in a minority government being formed. The balance of power in the Senate resting with the members of the Green Party, who increased their percentage of the vote nationally from 7.7 per cent in 2004 to 13.1 per cent.⁹

Gillard's ministry was fraught with vicious personal scrutiny by the Australian media. Her choice of clothing, her body shape, and her lack of domesticity were attacked in reports.¹⁰ Australia, it seemed, was not ready for a 'threat' to the male dominated establishment.

⁶ J. Edwards, *Quiet Boom: How the Long Economic Upswing Is Changing Australia and Its Place in the World* (Sydney, Australia: Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2006).

⁷ T. Abbott, Political chronicles: January to June 2000, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 46, no. 4 (2001), pp. 558-614.

⁸ Reserve Bank of Australia, *The Global Financial Crisis* (Australia: Reserve Bank, Accessed 22 March 2022), <https://www.rba.gov.au/education/resources/explainers/the-global-financial-crisis.html>.

⁹ Goot, *The new millennium*.

¹⁰ J. Gillard, *My Story* (Sydney, Australia: Knopf, 2014); Macintyre, *Outcomes, 1997-2019*.

General Developments in Schooling and Curriculum Internationally, in Australia and in the State of Western Australia

Between 2000 and 2014 globalisation also continued to affect schooling and education policy decisions across many nations, with related curriculum reform a central national economic policy in many of them. The focus was on skills perceived as being needed for a so-called ‘knowledge economy’,¹¹ as well as being central to working for the imagined community that nations wished to construct through schooling due to having a large proportion of multicultural citizens in the makeup of society created by increased global migration.¹² In line with that, governments worked to try to address the increase in secondary school retention rates that had taken place by broadening the curriculum to accommodate not only those wishing to go onto tertiary education, but also to meet the vocational needs of those students not wishing to do so.¹³

In the United Kingdom, the Brown Labour government was committed to increasing the school leaving age to 18 years and seeing 50 per cent of the relevant age cohort attending university by 2015. As part of a policy commitment to raising standards of upper school curricula, examinations and qualifications were of primary concern.¹⁴ The education system during the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition of 2010-2015 and the policies of Michael Gove as Education Secretary, though, had a significant negative impact. In fact, media educator Jenny Grahame proposed in 2013 that England and Wales were in “the most catastrophic period of educational administration” that teachers had ever seen in their lifetimes.¹⁵ As part of that

¹¹ W. W. Powell and K. Snellman, The knowledge economy, *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 30. (Palo Alto: Annual Reviews, Inc. 2004). pp. 199-220.

¹² F. Rizvi and B. Lingard, Globalizing education policy analysis, *Globalizing Education Policy* (London, UK: Taylor & Francis Ltd. 2009), pp. 44-70; Jones, *Understanding Education Policy: The Four Education Orientations' Framework*.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ J. Grahame, Back to the future? old and new agendas in media education, in P. Fraser and J. Wardle (eds.) *Current Perspectives in Media Education: Beyond the Manifesto* (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013). p. 7.

development, there was, in 2014, a comprehensive restructure of the senior secondary school courses, the GCSE courses, designed for Vocational students, and the A level courses, designed for students wishing to use the courses for tertiary entrance.¹⁶ During that time too, much debate ensued about which subjects were valuable and which subjects were devoid of value. It was a polarising time, and the matter was heavily debated in the British press.

In the United States by the early 21st century, and continuing during Obama's administration from 2009, public school policy remained focussed on standardised testing and accountability.¹⁷ That was a hallmark of the neoliberal reform movement that championed a conservative agenda. A result was an increase in the charter school system and a gradual decline in the traditional public school system. Further results included the devaluing of subjects that were not the focus in standardised testing as well as the abolishment of various cultural programs and bilingual education programs supporting minority cultural groups.

In Australia at the time, while schooling continued to be the responsibility of the various individual States and Territories, rather than the Federal government,¹⁸ the Keating and Hawke Labor governments sought, as indicated in the previous chapter, to create a national curriculum to meet the perceived need to build human capital thought necessary to be globally competitive. Curriculum reform now was linked to the reconstitution of education as a central arm of national economic policy. Also, education was seen as being an essential aspect of the perceived community the Government wished to construct through the process of schooling.¹⁹

In the later Howard Government years, too, it was reiterated that there was a need not only for a national curriculum, but also for a national system of assessment and examination,

¹⁶ Ofqual, *Confirmed assessment arrangements for reformed GCSE, AS and A level qualifications for first teaching in 2017*.

¹⁷ J. Spring, *The American School: from Puritans to Trump*. (New York, US: Taylor & Francis Ltd. 2018).

¹⁸ B. Lingard, It is and it isn't: vernacular globalization, educational policy and restructuring, in *Politics, Policies and Pedagogies in Education* (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2014). pp. 86-104.

¹⁹ Rizvi and Lingard, *Globalizing education policy analysis*. p. 96.

and nationalised testing. That represented a renewed focus on curricula as part of an emergent ‘audit culture,’²⁰ which was a hallmark of the global education reform movement. It culminated in the development of the National Curriculum Statements and Profiles, and the beginning of a national curriculum. Yet, curricula continued to be controlled by the States and Territories.²¹ Essentially, the Federal and State political structure in Australia meant that the national curriculum was likely to be always mediated by Federal structures but governed by State interests.²² Moreover, the zeitgeist in the Labor Rudd-Gillard-Rudd governments from 2007-2013, and then the Liberal government, under Tony Abbott (2013-2015) as prime minister continued to be one of neoliberalism, globalisation and risk society thinking.²³

In Western Australia, the ‘outcomes-based education system’ called the Curriculum Framework, which was based on student outcome statements describing outcomes of achievement, was mandated to be implemented in all Western Australian schools by 2005. The collective outcome statements were later to be called the ‘Outcomes and Standards Framework’. That was a radical curriculum reform that was not well received by teachers in the State.²⁴ That was largely because relatively little support for them came from the State education authorities.

²⁰ M. Power, *The Audit Society: Rituals of Verification* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997).

²¹ Rizvi and Lingard, Globalizing education policy analysis.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ G. W. Rodwell, Enter "risk society": national control and the Rudd, Gillard, Abbott, Turnbull and Morrison years (2007-18), in *The Australian Government Muscling in on School Education: A History 1901-2018* (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2020).

²⁴ K. Donnelly, Australia's adoption of outcomes based education: a critique, *Issues in Educational Research*, vol. 17, no. 2 (2007) pp. 183-206; Leggett and White, Waves of change: The critical role of assessment, reporting and accreditation in secondary curriculum reform in W.A. 1975-2005; C. Marsh, A story of collaboration and friction: curriculum making in Western Australia, 1970s-2010, in L. Yates, C. Collins, and K. O'Connor (eds.) *Australia's Curriculum Dilemmas: State Cultures and the Big Issues* (Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne University Press, 2011).

The raising of the school leaving age under the *Higher School Leaving Age and Related Provisions Act*²⁵ in 2005 brought pressure also. Its advent meant that students were required to either remain at school or participate in other approved programs, including apprenticeships/traineeships, public and private training courses, or employment, until the end of the year they turned 16 years of age. That meant that the Curriculum Council needed to offer more subjects and pathways to cater to a diverse range of students staying on at school. In response, secondary school education in Western Australia became more diverse in its subject offerings, with the number of courses rising to 52.²⁶

During the decade, media studies in Western Australia was itself transformed in many ways in response to the new policy and curriculum reforms, to the changing nature of the student population, and to societal expectations of the role of secondary schooling. With the introduction of outcomes-based education, media arts became one of the five discrete arts subjects housed under the umbrella of ‘the arts,’ that represented a shift away from connections to English and had an impact on the positioning of media studies teachers in some schools who had previously been members of English departments, becoming members of a collective arts’ department. As previously discussed, arts themselves were defined as including four other discrete subjects of knowledge: drama, music, visual art, and dance.²⁷

It was not long before a vocal teacher lobby group took their concerns to the media, and launched an attack not only on the State Government’s new OBE curriculum, but also on its implementation strategy.²⁸ That group was called PLATO (People Lobbying Against the

²⁵ Parliamentary Counsel's Office, *Acts Amendment (Higher School Leaving Age and Related Provisions) Bill 2005* (Perth, Western Australia: Department of Justice, Government of Western Australia, 2005).

²⁶ Curriculum Council, *Annual Report 2007-2008* (Perth, Western Australia: Curriculum Council, 2008).

²⁷ Department of Employment Education and Training, *Outcomes and Standards Framework: The Arts* (Perth, Western Australia: Government of Western Australia: The Department of Education and Training, 2005).

²⁸ Donnelly, Australia's adoption of outcomes based education: a critique; Marsh, A story of collaboration and friction: curriculum making in Western Australia, 1970s-2010.

Outcomes). The efforts of its members were successful in bringing their concerns front and centre in a societal debate through becoming front page news.

An eventual result was the demise of that aspect of curriculum reform. Indeed, Liberal government election promises to take State education back to the ‘tried and true’ was an influential part of their electoral success in 2008. Consequently, the new Liberal government set out to implement that position by adopting a series of changes to curriculum policies and practices.

General Developments in Media Education

In 2012, in the European Union, the digital switchover put a formal end to analogue media, turning all media into digital media. That also happened globally over subsequent years as nations moved to the digital distribution of media.²⁹ During the period too, changes took place on the internet very quickly. Digital literacy expert, Belshaw, identified that by 2003, digital media technologies were defined as ‘Web 2.0’ technologies.

Due to the advent of digital technologies, new programming languages made it easier for programmers to create software applications that enabled users to ‘write the web’ in the browser itself. That meant that everyday consumers with little technical knowledge could create wikis,³⁰ websites, video games, and other forms of media easily, and it made contributing and commenting on online media very simple and accessible. Overall, it was the era when the notion of the ‘prosumer’ emerged, to use a term coined by Alvin Toffler.³¹

The convergence of analogue media with internet technologies had profound effects on society at large. Emerging discourses created by the shift in media consumption were those of

²⁹ A. Toffler et al. The third wave's third way: networks vs. elementary particles, *New Perspectives Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 1 (2008). pp. 72-73.

³⁰ [Wikis are websites or databases developed collaboratively allowing any user to add and edit content online].

³¹ *Ibid.*

connectivity, participation, and sociality. It also had wide-ranging and global shifting effects socially, politically, culturally, and economically.

As the period under consideration, then, was one of significant digital technological advancement, it is not surprising that there was much debate amongst media and social theorists about how to define what was taking place. New descriptions of the convergence of media forms included ‘digital’ media, ‘online’ media, ‘social’ media and ‘new media’. Overall, the shift in question was defined by some as “the convergence between the computational logic characteristics of computers and the communicative logic characteristics of the media.”³² The era was also called the ‘age of the App’, as traditional forms of media such as television, film and radio, converged with digital forms through the internet. Moreover, smartphones and tablets began to change the way that people interacted with the web. Instead of having to go to a library or an ‘internet café,’ media consumers now had a search engine within a smartphone in their pockets. Consumption of media through streaming instead of through such physical media as DVDs and USBs, increased. At the time too, many Western societies operated under the assumption that increased media ‘use’ would lead to proficiency, with ‘web literacy’ being seen as something that happened automatically, rather being the product of being taught how to use it.³³

Relatedly, this was the first time that digital media technologies became more accessible to the average consumer of all ages. Previous decades saw the rise of the digital media consumer but now there were rapid developments in such media technologies as lower cost camcorders, computers and editing software, faster computer processing, increased digital storage capacity that was far less expensive and faster internet speeds. Relatedly, Rosen described as follows the shift of power away from the control of media industries:

³² W. Siapera, *Understanding New Media* (London, UK: Sage, 2018). p. xi.

³³ D. Belshaw, *A Brief History of Web Literacy and its Future Potential* (United States: Connected Learning Alliance, 2014).

You don't own the eyeballs. You don't own the press, which is now divided into pro and amateur zones. You don't control production on the new platform, which isn't one-way. There's a new balance of power between you and us.

The people formerly known as the audience are simply *the public* made realer, less fictional, more able, less predictable.³⁴

These changes contributed to the emergence of a new generation of individuals who used digital media technologies to create, publish, and comment, experiencing increasingly wider opportunities for creative expression and having a greater capacity than previously to respond as global citizens.³⁵

Regarding the latter, Livingstone and Sefton-Green described the developing awareness of preparing young people to manage this shifting landscape and how it related to their future job prospects,

For the past twenty years, the rhetoric of “the digital age” has loudly claimed that the recent and rapid take-up of digital, online, and networked technologies is fundamentally reshaping homes, schools, and communities. This rhetoric claims that society must find a way to prepare its youth for jobs that have not yet been invented and to live in ways—more digital, more connected—that the adults responsible for them cannot imagine.³⁶

Further, they went on to describe the nature of young people's uptake of digital media technologies and their deep immersion in the online space for socialisation:

While social scientists have studied “adolescence”, “youth”, and “peer culture” ever since the recognition (or emergence) of these very phenomena 50 years or so ago, in just the past decade, one activity has seemingly rewritten the norms and practices of teenage communication, being adopted with astonishing rapidity by the vast majority of young people—the use of online social networking sites. From about 2005 onward, it has been implausible to examine young people's friendships and peer networks without recognizing their sudden absorption in sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Tumblr, and more.³⁷

³⁴ J. Rosen, *The People Formerly Known As The Audience* (2006).
http://archive.pressthink.org/2006/06/27/ppl_frmr.html.

³⁵ M. Dezuanni, Re-visiting the Australian Media Arts curriculum for digital media literacy education, *The Australian Educational Researcher*, vol. 48 (November edition). pp. 873-887

³⁶ S. M. Livingstone and J. Sefton-Green, *The Class: Living and Learning in the Digital Age* (New York, US: New York University Press, 2017).

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 33.

Relatedly, Edward Snowden, an American former computer intelligence consultant leaked highly classified information from the US National Security Agency to the press. That prompted international debate about national security, freedom of speech, and individual privacy, underpinned by a government assumption that an augmented and expanded use of surveillance technologies could detect and prevent terrorism. The notion of the 'Post-Snowden Age' emerged, as his revelations had the effect of causing everyday consumers of digital media technologies to question what was going on underneath the surface in the world of digital technology and to suggest that the internet was becoming an extension of individual identities. Consumers also started to become more aware of who had access to their data and how it was being used.³⁸

As media technologies developed even more rapidly in the 2010s, an increasing awareness of the impact of the major media industry shift in power from Hollywood to Silicon Valley also grew.³⁹ Concurrently, there was an emergence of a greater consumer awareness of algorithmic culture, as social media technologies were used to create personalised algorithms of individual consumer consumption for marketing purposes. In Australia, and internationally, consumer awareness gave rise to a new cynicism about and distrust of the power of multinational media corporations, their lack of transparency, and the need for individuals in society to be critical of messages and find ways to decipher the difference between disinformation and truth.

During the period too, a number of media theorists identified such key moments of significant digital media 'disruption' on society as Web 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0 technological eras, and connected them to a timeline of the development of media studies in three corresponding

³⁸ C. Fuchs and D. Trottier, Internet surveillance after Snowden: A critical empirical study of computer experts' attitudes on commercial and state surveillance of the internet and social media post-Edward Snowden, *Journal of Information, Communication & Ethics in Society*, vol. 15, no. 4 (2017).

³⁹ S. Cunningham and D. Craig, *Social Media Entertainment: The New Intersection of Hollywood and Silicon Valley* (New York,US: NYU Press, 2019); Dezuanni, Re-visiting the Australian media arts curriculum for digital media literacy education.

stages, namely, Media Education 1.0, Media Education 2.0, and Media Education 3.0. Ptaszek stated that those three phases of media education as a timeline which outlined the dominant media forms that could be studied during each stage individually.⁴⁰ They can be represented as follows:

Table 21.1 Timeline of media education.

	<i>Time period</i>	<i>Dominant medium</i>
Media education 1.0	Second half of the twentieth century	Television, radio, print
Media education 2.0	First decade of the twenty-first century	Internet, online platforms, social media, blogs
Media education 3.0	Second decade of the twenty-first century	Social media, media platforms, mobile applications, the Internet of Things (based on algorithmic data processing)

⁴⁰ Ptaszek, Media Education 3.0? How big data, algorithms, and A.I. redefine media education, in H. Jenkins et al. (eds.) *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century* (Cambridge, US: The MIT Press, 2009). p. 230.

Media education 1.0 was described as the era of the critical study of the mass media and its underlying function. With the aim of promoting autonomy of thought, students were taught to decode hidden messages in media works, and to understand the context of active audiences and the influence and power of media industries.¹ Characterised by critical thinking towards media, it was the time when such ‘legacy’ media as television were still mostly broadcasted into television sets instead of being streamed on the internet.² Some also stated that Media Education 1.0 was a reflection of ‘Web 1.0’, which was first developed, during the 1980s and 1990s.³

The second era of digital disruption was defined as that of Web 2.0, characterised by a celebration of the evolution of the creative participatory possibilities for all, including the everyday consumer. Jenkins explained this as a time when:

Web 2.0 companies relied on the Internet as the platform for promoting, distributing, and refining their products: treating software as a service designed to run across multiple devices, relying on data as the killer app, and harnessing the collective intelligence of a network of users. Since Web 2.0’s introduction, it has become the cultural logic for e-business- a set of corporate practices that seek to capture and exploit participatory culture.⁴

It emerged at a time when some authors were arguing that old-style ‘critical’ media studies that focussed on textual analysis and political economy needed to be replaced by an approach that took advantage of the expressive possibilities of digital media. Jenkins, however, pointed to some of the challenges of the approach to consumer interaction with participatory culture, such as the need to combine ‘creative’ and ‘critical’ approaches. Others, were less cautious, asserting

¹ Ptaszek, Media Education 3.0? How big data, algorithms, and A.I. redefine media education.

² R. Hobbs, *Exploring the Roots of Digital and Media Literacy through Personal Narrative* (Philadelphia, US: Temple University Press, 2016); S. R. Poyntz, Media education, spectrality and acoustic space: an encounter with Derrida and McLuhan, *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, vol. 25, no. 1 (2009). pp. 133-148.

³ Ptaszek, Media Education 3.0? How big data, algorithms, and A.I. redefine media education; T. Miller, Media studies 3.0, *Television and New Media*, vol. 10, no. 1 (2009). pp. 5-6.

⁴ H. Jenkins, S. Ford, and J. Green, *Spreadable Media : Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York, US: New York University Press, 2013).

that the old, hierarchical model of mass media was finished, and that ordinary consumers were now empowered by the commercial practices of Google, Facebook, and other new media corporations.⁵

As digital media technologies continued to evolve, though, it came to be realised, that they were often driven by corporate agendas and government surveillance. Relatedly, as the infrastructure and social norms around internet consumption started to be questioned, the need for digital media literacy became more paramount. However, while the response was positive, Thornham and O'Sullivan observed that "well-established, internationally respected range of media studies courses had to be routinely called to account and ritually 'put in their place.'"⁶ On that, Curran, in 2013 declared that "media studies have been subject to periodic attack by quality newspapers, across the political spectrum, for over 15 years."⁷

The nature of the latter attack in Britain, Curran went on, was formulated by "prejudice and ignorance."⁸ After 30 years of being established in schools, there, media studies continued to be criticised, misunderstood, and a hot topic for politicians and journalists to point to as an example of a subject unworthy of its position in the education system.⁹ Moreover, general ignorance and misrepresentation of what media studies actually involved, was exacerbated by

⁵ D. Buckingham, Do we really need media education 2.0? Teaching media in the age of participatory culture, in C. Greenhow, J. Sonnevend and C. Agur (eds.) *Education and Social Media: Toward a Digital Future* (Cambridge, US: MIT Press, 2016). pp. 171-186; Jenkins et al., *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*; H. Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York, US: New York University Press, 2006). D. Gauntlett, Wide Angle: Is it time for Media Studies 2.0? *UK Media Education Association Newsletter*, vol. 5 (United Kingdom: Media Education Association, 2007). pp. 3-5.

⁶ S. Thornham and T. O'Sullivan, Chasing the real: 'employability' and the media studies curriculum, *Media Culture and Society*, vol. 26, no. 5 (2004). pp. 717-736.

⁷ J. Curren, Defending Media Studies, *MeCCSA Conference keynote address, 'Mickey Mouse Squeaks Back' Defending Media Studies*, (Coventry, UK: Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association, 2013). [Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association conference that brings together over 200 international media, communications, and cultural studies delegates].

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ D. Laughey, Trial by Media: The Case for and against Media Studies in the UK press- conference presentation, *Media Literacy 2010 Conference*, (London, UK, 2010). <https://www.slideserve.com/pete/trial-by-media-the-case-for-and-against-media-studies-in-the-uk-press>.

rhetoric generated by the right-of-centre press that promoted an understanding of the field as of being a potential hindrance to post-school student employability, notwithstanding evidence to the contrary.¹⁰

Prior to 2014, elements of media literacy education in the United Kingdom had been included as a component of the study of English, in response to changing understandings of literacy. That situation was based on a perceived need for curriculum and pedagogic reform that reflected changes in modern society and in response to the divide between media knowledge, skills, and dispositions that many children brought to the classroom.¹¹ The nature of media studies, with a focus on teaching students the skills to critically analyse the world that they lived in, however was viewed as a threat by political power brokers.

As a result of the challenges noted, the perception of the relevance of media education in the UK became bleak in the second decade of the twentieth century. Following attacks in the press and a general misunderstanding of the nature of subject content in the media studies course, there was a drop in the number of students taking media studies in GCSE, A2 and AS courses,¹² and some universities refused to acknowledge the subject as a valid one for tertiary entrance. Further, undergraduate numbers in tertiary media studies dropped. Moreover, in the GCSE English syllabus all reference to media texts were dropped. Indeed, it was stipulated that the study of digital texts was not to be allowed. Across the nation, too, the notion of ‘media literacy’ was largely abandoned in education rhetoric in favour of a functional concern with online access and safety.¹³

¹⁰ *Ibid*; L. Bennett and J. Kidd, Myths about media studies: the construction of media studies education in the British press, *Continuum*, vol. 31, no. 2 (2016). pp. 163-176. [Articles quoted from Littlejohn, *Daily Mail*, 12 November 2010; Petre and Knowsley, *Mail on Sunday*, 11 May 2014].

¹¹ M. Cannon, S. Connolly, and R. Parry, Media literacy, curriculum and the rights of the child, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, vol. 43, no. 2 (2020). pp. 1-13.

¹² [A2 and AS are final year studies for Year 12 Year and 13 in the UK, of students wishing to go onto tertiary education, which is similar to ATAR in Australia].

¹³ D. Buckingham, The success and failure of media education, *Media Education Research Journal*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2013). pp. 5-18.

Things were marginally better in the USA, as a range of not-for-profit agencies began to operate with a mission to assist citizens in developing digital media literacy. The National Association of Media Literacy Education for example, had the vision of making “media literacy highly valued and widely practiced as an essential life skill.” Members envisioned, it was added, “a day when everyone, and around the world, will possess the ability to gain access to, analyze, evaluate, create, and act, using all forms of communication.”¹⁴ In schools across the nation, however, engagement practices in the subject were varied. That was because since there was no unifying national curriculum, each American State developed and managed its own curriculum independently. Also, standardised testing across States shifted the focus away from media literacy.

Regarding Australia, media education from the 1990s was located primarily within the broader arts curriculum after chapters of the professional association, Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM) in each State strongly advocated for the area to be represented in curriculum documents and education policy.¹⁵

Then with the announcement of the establishment of the Australian national curriculum in 2008, which married some of the functions of the State and Federal education sectors, ATOM successfully lobbied for media arts to be included in the prescribed suite of five arts subjects, therefore consolidating its place in schools nationally. Media arts curricula were then developed for students from pre-primary to Year 10 level. Overall, they were underpinned by five key concepts, namely, media languages, representation, audiences, institutions, and technologies. Those were emphasised in the importance attached to students’ making of, and responding to, media works.¹⁶

¹⁴ National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), *Our Mission* (New York, US: NAMLE, Accessed 23 March 2022), <https://namle.net/about/>.

¹⁵ M. Dezuanni, Media literacy in Australia, Hobbs, R. et al. (eds.) *The International Encyclopedia of Media Literacy* (Hoboken, US: John Wiley & Sons, 2019). pp. 870-875.

¹⁶ Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), *The Arts: Foundation - Year 10* (Sydney, Australia: ACARA, 2015), <https://australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/the-arts/>.

The following description of the approach recommended for media education across the nation was outlined in the ACARA syllabus for media arts:

Media arts involves creating representations of the world and telling stories through communications technologies such as television, film, video, newspapers, radio, video games, the internet, and mobile media. Media arts connects audiences, purposes, and ideas, exploring concepts and viewpoints through the creative use of materials and technologies.¹⁷

From an international perspective, what was unique about this positioning of media arts in the Australian Curriculum was that it was housed within national arts education.¹⁸ It meant that students were encouraged to focus on skills and knowledge required to participate creatively and ethically in media culture.

The authorities overseeing media programs in schools, however, often did not choose to include the analysis of new digital media technologies. Instead, they promoted the study of more predictable traditional media forms such as film for analysis and production.¹⁹ That reflected a global trend identified by Cubitt:

Since one of the most imposing results of new media dynamics has been the increasingly rapid globalization of communications infrastructures, and increasing dependence on them for economic, political, social, and cultural globalizations, the lack of work historicizing the new terrain of global media governance is a specific weakness in contemporary media studies.²⁰

Considered in relation to Australian education nationally, that meant that Masterman's influence on Australian media education through the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, with his argument that teachers needed to lead students towards 'critical autonomy' endured. To put it another way, the approach was focussed on creativity among 'users' as much as 'producers', thereby continuing the cultural-studies tradition of focusing on ordinary culture, the active

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Dezuanni, Re-visiting the Australian Media Arts curriculum for digital media literacy education.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ S Cubitt, Media Studies and New Media Studies, in J. Hartley, J. Burgess, and A. Bruns (eds.) *A Companion to New Media Dynamics* (Oxon, UK: John Wiley & Sons Ltd. 2013). p. 17; Chakravartty and K. Sarikakis, *Media Policy and Globalization* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2006); L. deNardis, *Protocol Politics: The Globalization of Internet Governance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009); R. Collins, *Three Myths of Internet Governance* (Bristol, UK: Intellect Ltd. 2010).

audience, and ‘bottom-up’ causation in meaning systems. A major question about how to shift from small-scale, in-close ‘micro’ analysis of diverse local practices to large-scale, system-wide ‘macro’ understanding of the web of mutual causation presented itself.²¹ Subsequently, debate was conducted within the media education community as to whether the approach to media studies needed to be changed or expanded to include digital media specific concepts that were beginning to emerge.²²

Developments in Media Education in Western Australia

Towards the turn of the 21st century there was change in the air in Western Australia with regard to media studies. It was a time when many schools were making a transition from linear editing technologies to digital editing technologies that relied on the internet, on computers, and on such digital editing software as ‘Adobe Premiere.’ It was a time, too, when there was a divide opened up between schools that could afford the new technology (or were big public schools that secured generous grants from parents and other groups), and those that were less wealthy and thus could not afford to make the transition.

Regardless of the situation, there were certain problems. For example, the technologies had many glitches and limitations with the student editing experience being described as a “puny little video window that shuddered and jerked from frame to frame.”²³ Within a few years, however, that type of editing technology started to be improved rapidly to become more user friendly and to have the use of full screen video with less waiting time for the computer to process (render). That situation prompted Mark Bryce, a WA teacher of media studies to encourage peers, saying “if you are intending to invest money in a video technology,” he suggested, “then now might be the time to go digital.”²⁴ Moreover, while he pointed out that

²¹ J. Hartley, *Digital Futures for Cultural and Media Studies* (Hoboken, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2011).

²² Masterman, *Teaching the Media*.

²³ M. Bryce, If you can't stand the heat.. Mark Bryce does some sums, *ATOM News*, vol. 3. (1997) p. 14.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

wealthy schools were investing in semi-professional ‘set ups’, with costs of up to \$12,000, he added, “let’s spare a moment or two about those underfed media departments which are struggling to find a video recorder let alone edit with one.”²⁵ He also encouraged those schools to consider embracing the lower end of the ‘technology ladder’ and to aim for a less expensive digital ‘set up’ costing around \$3000

Influences on Media Studies Curriculum Development in Western Australia

Julie Davis, the President of ATOM WA, referred in 1998 to a change in terminology in the media studies course that reflected the shift in digital media technologies more broadly:

Media language has also undergone a change; in fact the word “mass” is to be taken out of all upper school syllabus materials in the future to allow for emerging technological changes which are sure to encompass and incorporate media.²⁶

The development to which she referred was the first time that new digital media technologies were accommodated in the WA media studies syllabi. Each is highlighted in point 3 in the two extracts shown below and following:

Media Studies CAF Course EO12 Year 12 Course Outcomes	
1	Understand the specific characteristics of selected media
2	Understand patterns of construction in a range of media texts
3	Understand the effects of selection processes in mass media productions
4	Understand how value systems and contexts construct meaning in media texts
5	Understand external constraints which shape media production
6	Use a range of communication skills to present critical evaluation of media texts
7	Apply practical skills in one medium to demonstrate understanding of media constructs
8	Use communication and team skills to construct a media message.

1999 Media Studies CAF Course Outcomes²⁷

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 15

²⁶ J. Davis, *President's report, ATOM News*, vol. 1 (1998). pp. 3, 9.

²⁷ Curriculum Council, *Media Studies (Year 12) -E012*. p. 5.

Media Studies CAF Course EO12 Year 12 Course Outcomes	
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5	Understand external constraints which shape media production
6	Use a range of communication skills to present critical evaluation of media texts
7	Apply practical skills in one medium to demonstrate understanding of media constructs
8	Use communication and team skills to construct a media message.

2002-2003 Media Studies CAF Course Outcomes²⁸

The CAF courses, as described above, continued to be the mandated media studies curriculum that was rewritten for implementation in 2002-2003. The rewritten courses reflected the shift in digital media technologies. That was demonstrated in the statement that “Media Studies provides students with opportunities to comprehend and act in response to increasingly complex media technologies.” It was reflected also in a call for students to demonstrate agency, which was defined as “the ability (of students) to participate in contemporary society as active citizens, through their awareness of the political, economic, historical and technological implications of the media.”²⁹ At the same time, traditional media forms continued to be the main focus of study, indicated in statements like, “The Year 12 subject involves the study of the following media: Film, Television, Radio”, although it was added that “teachers may choose to adopt a medium-by-medium approach or a cross-media approach, using interactive technologies where appropriate and available.”³⁰

As discussed previously in this chapter, an ‘outcomes-based education system’ called the Curriculum Framework, which was based on student outcome statements describing

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 76.

²⁹ Curriculum Council, *Media Studies (Year 12), 2002-2003 Common Assessment Tasks* (Perth, Western Australia: Curriculum Council, 2002).

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 75.

outcomes of achievement, was introduced in Western Australian schools, two years later, in 2005.³¹ While that, like all other aspects of the Curriculum Framework was mandated to be adopted in all schools, the State Department of Education also developed achievement targets which only State schools had to pursue. By contrast, teachers in private schools had autonomy to implement the Curriculum Framework overarching and learning area outcomes by developing learning programs “according to their circumstances, ethos and needs of their students to ensure they achieve these outcomes.”³²

The outcomes-based approach outlined, for the arts was described as follows:

The Arts learning area has four outcomes. Content for these outcomes focus on aesthetic understanding and arts practice developed through dance, drama, media, music and visual art forms. The four outcomes for The Arts (*Arts Ideas, Arts Skills and Processes, Arts Responses and Arts in Society*) are organised in each form according to their particular language and conventions.³³

³¹ Curriculum Council, *Curriculum Framework Curriculum Guide- The Arts* (Perth, Western Australia: Curriculum Council, 2005). p. 6.

³² *Ibid.* p. 5.

³³ *Ibid.* p. 6.

The outcomes were then presented thus:

OUTCOMES	CONTENT ORGANISERS
Arts Ideas	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create original ideas • Interpreting the ideas of others • Exploring arts ideas • Developing arts ideas • Presenting arts ideas 	<p>The Arts content is presented in the five art forms: dance, drama, music, media and visual art</p>
Arts Skills and Processes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using skills, techniques and processes • Using arts conventions • Using and adapting technologies in the arts 	<p>The Arts content is presented in the five art forms: dance, drama, music, media and visual art</p>
Arts Responses	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to arts works and experiences • Reflecting on arts works and experiences • Evaluating arts works and experience 	<p>The Arts content is presented in the five art forms: dance, drama, music, media and visual art</p>
Arts in Society	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valuing the arts • Understanding Australian arts • Understanding historical and cultural contexts in the arts • Understanding the economic significance of the arts 	<p>The Arts content is presented in the five art forms: dance, drama, music, media and visual art</p>

The shift from media studies outlined under the learning area of English to the arts area presented some new challenges for media studies teachers in interpreting and delivering the syllabus. Moreover, within the arts, media arts was aligned with the arts outcomes framework and content dividers: outlined as creating, interpreting, exploring, developing and presenting. As a result, the subject lost some of its distinctness.

The arts syllabus overall was presented in the form of books outlining the Curriculum Framework, the outcomes, the levels of achievement, and how to ‘get started’. Further materials, some of which were developed by officers with the Education Department were

developed, including a work sample book and a guide to support teachers.¹ A later support document, the *Curriculum Framework Curriculum Guide- The Arts* was published in 2005 to further support teachers in State schools. That was as a response to them indicating they had a need “for support materials to provide advice about what students should be taught to progress their achievement of outcomes across the phases of development.”² The document in question outlined traditional media examples, which maintained the focus on film, television, radio, and other traditional media forms, instead of on the new and emerging digital media technologies forms developing online.

The examples and elaborations in the work samples provided were consistent with the ‘science of the text’ approach to media studies that was highlighted in the 1980s and 1990s, in that there was use of a cultural theory lens, and an analysis and production of narratives approach using ‘traditional media technologies’ in forms such as television, film, CD covers and video games but with a distinct arts-aesthetic perspective. The focus in the arts theme, ‘Arts Ideas’, hence, for example, was on “ways to manipulate media codes, conventions, elements and concepts drawing on links from times, cultures and places to create innovative media ideas (e.g. juxtaposition of old and contemporary film footage to create a commentary).”³ Similarly, in ‘Arts Skills and Processes’, whilst the focus was on “traditional and emerging technologies based on the task,”⁴ it was ‘newer’ non-digital media forms and digital techniques that were emphasised rather than Web 2.0 technologies. The attention was on “understanding the form, current and future trends in special effects (e.g. 3D scanning, motion capture, effects in games,”⁵ “current trends and historical phases in graphic design (e.g. compare record/CD

¹ Education Department of Western Australia (EDWA), *Outcomes and Standards Framework, The Arts. Work Samples* (Perth, Western Australia: EDWA, 1998).

² T. Temby and N. Jeffery, Foreword, *Curriculum Framework Curriculum Guide- The Arts* (Perth, Western Australia: Curriculum Council, 2005). p. 1.

³ Curriculum Council, *Curriculum Framework Curriculum Guide- The Arts*. p. 27.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 53.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 53.

covers in different decades)”⁶ and “flash animation, stop motion and puppetry for television.”⁷ Additionally, whilst the language in the theme ‘Arts in Society’ included reference to “media experiences through social, political, economic, historical and cultural issues” could be interpreted as relating to a Web 2.0 perspective, the elaboration on it stating that “media practitioners are members of highly skilled teams” contradicted the understanding of Web 2.0 technology producers. Many Web 2.0 media producers are every day unskilled individuals that upload material onto the social media sites from home.

To consider the latter point further, it is true that teachers of media studies had the freedom to interpret and analyse some of the syllabus points using Web 2.0 technologies. Regarding the theme ‘Arts Responses’ for example, it was stated that “the development and realisation of media works can be analysed through a detailed reflection on the processes of own media making, choices, key decisions (and) audience, the effect of personal values and contextual influences.”⁸ Nevertheless, the work samples provided for teachers through the support materials indicated that the analysis of traditional media technologies of the former syllabus was what was maintained. This was so, despite the fact that the Curriculum Framework and Student Outcome Statements were introduced during the ‘Media Education 2.0’ phase described earlier.

The Start of a New Era

The Western Australian Curriculum Council conducted a review of post-compulsory education in 2002. That led to the publishing of a report entitled, *Our Youth, Our Future*.⁹ Following its recommendations being considered, a new media studies curriculum for Year 11 and 12 students was introduced. Moreover, after decades of being rejected, the subject was given

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 53.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 55.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 79.

⁹ Curriculum Council, *Our Youth, Our Future* (Perth, Western Australia: Curriculum Council, 2002).

tertiary entrance status. Using an outcomes-based approach, the media studies wholly school-assessed Common Assessment Framework (CAF) courses for upper school were then rewritten and expanded into a tertiary entrance course titled Media Production and Analysis (MPA). At last, teachers of media studies could begin to shrug off the subject's 'Mickey Mouse' image and feel a new sense of legitimacy, joining the 'big league' of historically stable, established, and highly valued tertiary entrance subject options for secondary students.

The newly written upper school subject syllabus, with its use of academic language based on a cultural theory paradigm, was presented as providing media studies to give students a specialist lens through which they could critique the world. Young stated that that type of construction was characteristic of high-status subjects that sought to accentuate their abstractness from everyday life. At the same time, the nature of the 'received' curriculum was dependent on the teacher's emphasis on learning or doing. They, after all, were also developing their own understanding of the new version of the subject.

The dual emphasis suggested by the title 'Media Production and Analysis' was intended to reinforce the notion that the curriculum was based on more than production and thus was not just for students of lower ability. The suggestion was that academic rigour would come from engagement in a combination of textual analysis and media production, with the latter conforming to The Arts, Technology and Enterprise and English learning area outcomes detailed in the Curriculum Framework.¹⁰

MPA was divided into semester-long units based on two streams of difficulty, entitled 'stages.' These were to cater for different pathways of a diverse student cohort. Stages were stage one 1A, 1B (then later 1C and 1D) and two (stage 2A and 2B) were for the workplace or vocationally and tertiary bound students, and stage three was designed solely for tertiary bound

¹⁰ Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis 2009* (Perth, Western Australia: Curriculum Council, 2009). p. 3.

students. Within units one and two also, there were optional Vocational and Education Training (VET) sections of competency that could also be embedded in the courses to assist students wishing to acquire those VET competencies for undertaking courses leading to vocational careers.

It was announced also that there would be compulsory examinations to be sat by all Year 12 students before they could graduate. Relatedly, the units were described in the form of pathways for students to pursue so they could achieve their Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE). That was the new name for the high school certificate received at the end of Year 12.

A combined stage two and stage three written external examination was designed in 2007 for the Media Production and Analysis course. Steps were taken to ensure that within the examination, there was appropriate accommodation made for less academically able stage two students as well as to provide the required academic rigour required for stage three students. Additionally, stage three students were given a 13-mark scaling advantage overall to allow for the difference between the stage two course and the stage three course. The underlying rationale for that was explained at teacher information sessions provided by the Curriculum Council during the implementation phase.

Overall, the course was written in accordance with the principles underlying the Curriculum Framework and students were assessed in relation to the eight levels of achievement using outcome statements. Regarding the pitching of units, they were pitched at different levels of achievement. It was stated, for example that, “Stage 2 units provide opportunities for applied learning but there is a focus more on academic learning. The content is notionally pitched at levels 4 to 6.”¹¹ Teachers were required to use this framework to

¹¹ Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis 2009, Course Units* (Perth, Western Australia: Curriculum Council, 2009). p. 6.

determine each students' overall level of achievement based on outcome progression maps made available for each of the four outcomes. Moreover, that was to be undertaken by using summative assessment investigations, productions, and responses, with different weightings applied in relation to these at different stages and in accord with the level of theoretical complexity detailed for each. Teachers then had to use grade descriptors to report student achievement based on descriptions of predetermined standards. For those taking stage 2 and 3 units, those were then combined with the external examination mark to determine the tertiary entrance rank to be used for tertiary entrance purposes. A particular characteristic of that structure was that it involved combining two theoretically incompatible systems, namely, that of an outcomes-based approach and a numerical assessment approach, thus setting it up to be unpopular and confusing for students, teachers and parents.

Not surprisingly, then, tension amongst teachers of media studies in Western Australia increased during the period. Whilst many teachers celebrated the introduction of media studies as a tertiary entrance subject, others lamented that the marker of achievement in the course was primarily based on writing, determined through the external written examination. Also, students enrolled in an MPA course with a focus on making films who desired to move onto tertiary media studies courses found that there was only school-based assessment for production within the course structure. That was disappointing, especially for those for whom film making was their strength and passion.

Following successful lobbying by teachers, the practical production submission became an externally assessed component from 2009.¹² Moreover, unlike for other arts' tertiary entrance external practical examinations at the time, media productions for external tertiary

¹² Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis: Accreditation Draft 2008* (Perth, Western Australia: Curriculum Council, 2007). p. 9.

entrance assessment could be created in groups of up to six members. That was seen to constitute a unique and popular attraction for students selecting to enrol in the subject.

As with all external ATAR assessments, MPA production assessment was designed to discriminate between student achievement in each cohort and to rank students accordingly for the purpose of generating a discrete mark. That mark, as indicated already, was then to be combined with the written mark in the external examination to generate an individual's tertiary entrance score. In the early years, students were required to submit a group production which was usually a short film, as well as five pages of individual documentation to verify their involvement in the process. What eventuated, though, was a tendency amongst some groups, for the latter to look almost the same for each member. That made it difficult for the external markers to discriminate between the different levels of achievement within a group. A result was that SCSA statisticians pointed out that requirements for student mark discrimination were not met.

To try to resolve the issue, the statisticians recommended reducing the group size for making production submissions. Over the next couple of years, however, WA teachers of media on the CAC fought successfully for students to be allowed to submit their work in the larger groups. One argument was that to reduce group size would put pressure on a media departments' technical and time resources in each school. Another was that it would significantly advantage those in richer, often private schools and disadvantage those in lower-socio economic, more predominantly State schools.

Overall, then, work in the larger groups resulted in a more egalitarian 'playing field' existing across schools. As a result, authorities from SCSA allowed it to continue for a few years. Gradually, though, it was reduced until by 2013 the maximum group size was three students. The following year that was reduced again to two.

Other revisions were also undertaken in 2014. Regarding the combined stage 2 and 3 external examinations, it was decided that they would be written as separate examinations. Additionally, the grading system of the courses moved back to a more familiar structure of grades A to E, with grade cut-offs determined by using grade descriptions provided by SCSA to ensure comparability amongst students across the State.¹³ A year later, stage two students were given the option to opt out of the stage 2 examination and be marked solely on their in-school performance. The motivating factor was a desire to ease the pressure on those students who were not aiming for tertiary entrance.¹⁴ Later, with a significant drop in enrolments in the stage two courses across all subjects resulted in stage two examinations being discontinued in the following years.

Notwithstanding the changes noted, the content of the syllabus remained relatively the same over the period. The emphasis still reflected 1980s cultural theory, such as the notion of “audiences as complex, active and inconsistent.”¹⁵ In particular, Hall’s theory of audience reception was evident in the rationale for the course where it was stated that, “audiences are composed of complex individuals with unique histories, experiences, attitudes and values that they bring to their viewing and listening, and which influence their interpretations of media works.”¹⁶

The courses, still outlined as stages in 2009, extended the rigour underpinning the former CAF course. A certain amount of liberation was also provided as no longer was there a requirement that the same terminology and framework needed to be used across all arts subjects. The overall course outcomes were based on the four outcomes detailed in the four

¹³ School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA), *Media Production and Analysis Syllabus Refinements Summary- for Implementation and Examination in 2012* (Perth, Western Australia: SCSA, 2011).

¹⁴ J. Offer, Certification, *eCircular*, vol. 6 (Perth, Western Australia: SCSA, 2014).

¹⁵ Hall et al., *Culture, Media, Language : Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79*.

¹⁶ Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis 2009, Rationale* (Perth, Western Australia: Curriculum Council, 2009). p. 3.

outcomes from the Outcomes and Standards Framework. Three major content areas, namely, media language, audiences, and production context, were then outlined. Within these broad categories there were subdivisions. 'Media Language' was deemed to consist of 'media form', 'narrative, codes, and conventions', 'representation', and 'skills and processes.' 'Audiences' was deemed to consist of 'readers' social and cultural experiences', 'values, attitudes, and ideologies', 'subcultures', and 'past, present, and emerging trends.' Production context was deemed to consist of 'institutions and independents', 'media use and target audience', 'cultural contexts', and 'controls and constraints.' Then in the 2014 revision, 'Skills and Processes' outlined in 2009 as a subdivision of 'Media Language' was elevated to a fourth content area in its own right.

Overall, both versions of the course reflected Masterman's theoretical framework for media education, which was based on cultural theory from the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, and which was summarised as follows:

1. The sources, origins, and determinants of media constructions... it is necessary to understand the determinants of media texts as a much more complex web of often conflicting interests and pressures.
2. The dominant techniques and codings employed by the media to convince us of the truth of their representations.
3. The nature of the 'reality' constructed by the media, the values implicit in media representations.
4. The ways in which media constructions are read or received by their audiences.¹⁷

Both also were based on the key concepts identified by Masterman as essential to be taught by teachers. They included ideology, genre, rhetoric, realism, naturalism, construction, selection, preferred meaning, denotation and connotation, audience positioning, myth, distribution, mediation, representation, subjectivity, coding/encoding/decoding, audience segmentation, narrative structure, pleasure, sign, sources, and participation.¹⁸

¹⁷ Masterman, *Teaching the Media*. p. 21.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 23.

The following are examples of some concepts being addressed in the course,

Ideology

Pleasure: (media works) are enjoyed and appreciated by audiences for their beauty, their entertainment or interest value, their ingenuity and originality.¹⁹

Distribution

An understanding of form and how it shapes content should underpin the study of any medium. Knowledge of the technologies, terminology, production styles, processes, skills and techniques, modes of distribution/transmission.²⁰

Genre, realism, construction, selection, preferred meanings, narrative structure:

Narratives are intrinsic to media works and the narrative elements of character, setting, conflict and resolution are essential components of both fiction and non-fiction genre. Codes and conventions are tools used in the construction and deconstruction of narratives. Producers construct preferred meanings and viewpoints through the selection of technical, symbolic, written and audio codes, and multiple meanings are interpreted by different audiences. An understanding of how selection processes construct meaning, realism and viewpoints in a range of genre is essential in both analysis and production of media works.²¹

Representation, naturalisation:

The concept of representation is fundamental to the constructed nature of all media, including fiction, non-fiction, and realist forms. Representation includes processes of stereotyping through which over-simplified representations become naturalised, and values become associated with issues and cultural groups.²²

Ideology:

Values underpin all media works, shaping narratives and the selections of codes and conventions. Audiences make meaning from the media according to their own values, attitudes, and ideological positions.²³

The overall emphasis evident here was consistent with the media education 1.0 and 2.0 phases in developments internationally described earlier, especially in terms of the focus on the encoded and hidden meanings of producers of a message and the highlighting of the role of

¹⁹ Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis 2009, Rationale*. p. 3.

²⁰ Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis 2009, Course Content* (Perth, Western Australia: Curriculum Council, 2009). p. 4.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 4.

²² *Ibid.* p. 4.

²³ *Ibid.* p. 5.

context, especially including the activity of the media industry and a recipient's attitudes to media content.²⁴

The syllabus content also included detail on the changing digital media landscape, that was broad enough to allow teachers of media studies to engage with Web 1.0, 2.0, and even 3.0 technologies. That was apparent in the statement that "Media Production and Analysis aims to prepare all students for a future in a digital and global world by providing the foundation for lifelong learning about the media."²⁵ It was apparent too in the following statement in the rationale for the courses,

The modern media are marked by the convergence of communication and information technologies, brought about by digitisation. Digitisation makes possible the conversion of a range of different media into a form that enables them to be understood and manipulated through a computer, At the same time, different forms of communication have converged. Through networking, the computer itself has become a medium located somewhere between the telephone and broadcasting. It offers both interpersonal and mass communication opportunities for the full integration of analysis and production. Through multimedia, students can deconstruct a work, transform it or produce an original work combining visual, audio and print production skills. Studies in this field are of vocational relevance in a workplace dominated increasingly by multimedia applications.²⁶

These references to the new digital media content and related concepts, considered as sitting alongside Masterman's 'media education 1.0' approach, indicated the beginning of a shift to a combination of media education 1.0 and 2.0 in the Western Australian media studies curriculum, to produce a mixed method approach as also outlined in 2007 by Buckingham. The latter approach was one of applying classical (critical) media education 1.0 and 2.0 categories of representation, language, production, and audience to the internet and new media, in such a way as follows:

Representation

This encompasses the ways in which websites communicate 'truth', furthering notions such as authenticity; the presence or absence of specific points of view or aspects of

²⁴ Ptaszek, Media Education 3.0? How big data, algorithms, and A.I. redefine media education. p. 233.

²⁵ Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis 2009*. p. 3.

²⁶ Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis 2009, Rationale*.

experience; reliability, credibility, or partiality of internet sources; and the hidden values or ideologies of internet content and discourses.²⁷

It was made clear that what was being emphasised here could be pursued in MPA Unit 2B when addressing “selection processes, including sources of information, presentation style, selection, omission and emphasis.”²⁸

On ‘Language’, it was stated:

This allows one to focus on an analysis of the use of visual and verbal ‘rhetoric’ in website design, including principles of graphic design, such as the combination of visual effects and text, or the use of sound; the prescribed navigation built into the structure of website design; and ways of seducing the user through the ‘friendliness’ of its interfaces.”²⁹

It was made clear that what was being emphasised here could be pursued in MPA Unit 2B by studying “technological trends e.g. convergence of different media forms, global access, audience access and use of new media forms,”³⁰ and through in Unit 3B, by studying “rhetorical techniques to persuade audiences.”³¹

On ‘Production’ it was stated:

This encompasses website authorship, the use of the internet by companies, individuals, or interest groups as a means of persuasion and influence; the technology and software used to evaluate and disseminate online materials as well as professional website development practices; commercial revenues and the role of advertising, promotion, and sponsorship; and commercial relations between the internet and other media such as television and computer games³² could be pursued through MPA Unit 3B by studying, “media ownership and industry issues e.g. economic imperatives”³³, “how knowledge of the process of construction enables the reader to make resistant or alternative readings of media texts”³⁴, “marketing strategies to target specific audiences.”³⁵ and “impact of new technologies on media and audiences.”³⁶

²⁷ D. Buckingham, *Beyond Technology, Rethinking Learning in the Age of Digital Culture* (Oxford, UK: Polity Press, 2008). p. 5.

²⁸ Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis Unit 2B: Press and Broadcasting* (Perth, Western Australia: Curriculum Council, 2009). p. 20.

²⁹ Buckingham, *Beyond Technology, Rethinking Learning in the Age of Digital Culture*.

³⁰ Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis Unit 2B: Press and Broadcasting*. p. 20.

³¹ Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis Unit 3B: Power and Persuasion*. p. 25.

³² Buckingham, *Beyond Technology, Rethinking Learning in the Age of Digital Culture*.

³³ Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis Unit 3B: Power and Persuasion*. p. 25.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 24.

³⁵ Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis Unit 2B: Press and Broadcasting*. p. 19.

³⁶ Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis Unit 1B: Introduction to Point of View*. p. 12.

Finally, on 'Audience' it was stated:

This focuses on the ways in which there could be explicit and hidden ways of targeting advertising; the nature of 'participation' on the internet; ways of using the network to collect information about consumers; the use of the internet in everyday life by various groups; modes of using and interpreting websites by individual persons or groups together with determining the benefits they derive from them; and public debates on the 'effects' of the internet, such as in relation to online security and 'addiction.'³⁷

It was made clear that what was being emphasised could be pursued in could be interpreted through MPA Units by studying, "how audiences respond and interact with new media,"³⁸ "marketing of media products,"³⁹ "impact of changes in technology on familiar non-fiction forms,"⁴⁰ "how different audiences use media,"⁴¹ "how the purpose of the text and the reading context influence audience response and interpretation,"⁴² "impact of networking and the internet on media services and audiences,"⁴³ and "ethical issues and legal consequences e.g. invasion of privacy."⁴⁴

Regarding each of the four areas just considered, it needs to be kept in mind that the period was one where much change was occurring, and the complexities and phenomena of digital culture were still new and emerging, and only beginning to be understood by many media education theorists. Indeed, they were more the focus of researchers in the field of surveillance studies and digital culture. Amongst those were Manovich⁴⁵, Rushkoff⁴⁶ and Uricchio.⁴⁷

³⁷ Buckingham, D. Digital media literacies: rethinking media education in the age of the internet, *Research in Comparative and International Education*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2007). pp. 43-55.

³⁸ Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis 2009, Unit 1A Personal Experience*. p. 11.

³⁹ Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis 2009, Unit 1A Personal Experience*. p. 12.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis 2009, Unit 1C: Entertainment*. p. 14.

⁴² *Ibid.* p. 14

⁴³ Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis 2009, Unit 1D Infotainment*. p. 16.

⁴⁴ Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis Unit 2B: Press and Broadcasting*. p. 21.

⁴⁵ L. Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, US: MIT Press, 2001).

⁴⁶ D. Rushkoff, *Program or Be Programmed: Ten Commands for a Digital Culture* (California, US: Soft Skull Press, 2011).

⁴⁷ W. Uricchio, The algorithmic turn: photosynth, augmented reality and the changing implication of the image, *Visual Studies*, vol. 26, no. 1, (2011). pp. 25-35.

Of significance too is that in 2006, US media theorist, Hobbs, argued that it was essential that teachers who focused on the analysis of media information, media advertising, and media entertainment should consider extending their interests into related new forms including the internet, mobile phones, video games, and mobile devices, new sources of information including search engines and blogs and new social and economic issues, including identity and anonymity, privacy, and surveillance.⁴⁸ Thinking along this line was written into the 2009 MPA stages courses. For example, amongst the suggested media contexts for study were “video games⁴⁹ and wiki sites e.g. blogs and ‘My Space’.”⁵⁰ It was also compulsory in the 2009 version of the syllabus to teach “networking and globalisation”⁵¹, “the impact of media access and interaction on societies and individuals”⁵² and “the impact of globalisation on national identity,”⁵³ and in the 2012 version to teach “global access and issues of privacy and accuracy,”⁵⁴ and for the first time, “interactive and social media.”⁵⁵

By 2014, when the syllabus was written as separate ‘General’ and ATAR courses there was a broader, more generic focus, with a stripping back of examples and detail, to facilitate thinking on how any media could be a focus of study. A consequence was that there was less encouragement of and suggestions for teachers than previously to engage with challenging new digital media technologies that were more complex than traditional media forms and were

⁴⁸ Ptaszek, *Media Education 3.0? How big data, algorithms, and A.I. redefine media education*. p. 234; R. Hobbs, *Reconceptualizing media literacy for a digital age*, in D. Madigan and A. Martin (eds.) *Digital Literacies for Learning* (London, UK: Facet Publishing, 2006). p. 100.

⁴⁹ Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis 2009, Unit 1A Personal Experience*. p. 10.

⁵⁰ Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis 2009 Unit 1B: Introduction to Point of View*. p. 18.

⁵¹ Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis 2009 Unit 3B: Power and Persuasion* p. 24

⁵² Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis 2009 Unit 3A: Media Art Forms*. p. 22.

⁵³ Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis 2009 Unit 3B: Power and Persuasion* p. 24.

⁵⁴ School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA), *Media Production and Analysis: Accredited March 2008 (updated 2012) For Examination 2014, Unit 2B Press and Broadcasting* (Perth, Western Australia: SCSA, 2012).

⁵⁵ School Curriculum and Standards Authority, *Media Production and Analysis: Accredited March 2008 (updated 2011) For teaching and examination 2012, Unit 3B Power and Persuasion Media Production and Analysis: Accredited March 2008 (updated 2012) For Examination 2014* SCSA, 2012).

changing rapidly. Moreover, whilst the media types outlined as choices for study in the courses were “film, television, photography, print media and digital media,”⁵⁶ in practice, the production and analysis of digital media was the least popular form chosen by teachers of media in Western Australia for understanding in their classrooms. Significant too was that because many schools had just made investments in exciting new digital editing facilities and camcorders as those technologies had become less expensive, film and television production and analysis continued to dominate with media studies in schools in the State.

Textbooks and other Teacher Support Materials

The prescribed Media Production and Analysis (MPA) courses were complemented by textbooks written specifically for them by Jan McMahon (Barrie McMahon’s wife) and Julie Keane, both of whom were experienced teachers in the field. Jan, had over 30 years of experience in teaching and developing media education courses in Western Australia, had also been one of the writers for the arts learning area in the Curriculum Framework document and the writer of the Year 11 and Year 12 MPA courses of study. Julie had been an educator for more than 20 years, teaching media studies at all levels of schooling, as well as at tertiary level at Edith Cowan University. Also, both were committee members on the Curriculum Council Media Studies Syllabus Committees and had served on the executive team of ATOM WA.⁵⁷

A range of textbooks were produced to complement all the stages courses, and some were also updated and revised over this period. Moreover, while they were written for student use, they were a lifeline for many new and experienced teachers of media studies, being instrumental in helping them develop a shared understanding of the MPA courses across the State, including how to use ‘pathways’ to allow students to engage with media in different

⁵⁶ School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA), *Media Production and Analysis ATAR Year 11: Accredited 2014, Unit 1 Popular Culture* (Perth, Western Australia: SCSA, 2014). p. 9.

⁵⁷ J. Keane and J. McMahon, *Media Production and Analysis: A Resource for Units 3A-3B*, 1st ed. (Perth, Western Australia: Impact Publishing, 2006).

ways. Speaking to the teachers, the writers stated: “This book can be used in conjunction with your teaching program. It should also be used as a resource for your media students studying the Media Production and Analysis Course of Study.”⁵⁸

The activities outlined in the textbooks provided examples for media learning in relation to television, radio, print, film, computer, and multimedia. Moreover, they were detailed analysis of content in a framework designed to assist students to:

- Gather the essential knowledge they (will) need to demonstrate the outcomes and complete a major task.
- Develop skills in research, analysis, written, oral and multimedia communication and production; and
- Think through their ideas before they complete a major task.”⁵⁹

Also, because the textbooks were mapped closely to the syllabus, they dealt with not only with the same cultural studies approach to media studies but also with the inclusion of new and emerging technologies. Furthermore, while the examples provided were predominantly related to film, television, radio, photography and print media, revisions over time also included examples and analyses of digital media technologies.

The first textbook produced was *Media Production and Analysis: A Resource for Units 1A-2B*. It was “designed as a resource for Year 11 and Year 12 students undertaking the Media Production Units of Study”⁶⁰ for any of the units MPA 1A, 1B, 2A or 2B. It contained explanations for understanding the prescribed outcomes. Also, assessment tasks and activities for use in class were suggested within a framework for study based around the essential content areas of the course, media language, audiences, and production. It also considered the lens of students applying their knowledge in the form of the four course outcomes, media ideas, media production, responses to media and media in society.⁶¹

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 4.

⁵⁹ J. Keane and J. McMahon, *Media Production and Analysis: A Resource for Units 1A to 2B* (Cottesloe, Western Australia: B&G Resource Enterprises, 2005). p. 5.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p. 5.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* p. 6.

In the 2006 first edition release of the complementary text *Media Production and Analysis: A Resource for Units 3A-3B*⁶², the emphasis was on providing appropriate extension and rigorous work for tertiary bound students. On these, the authors stated: “This book is more rigorous than our first book because of the need to extend students seeking university entrance. It is expected that the higher levels of this course will be comparable with the same levels in all other courses of study.”⁶³ A framework for media analysis presented was based on “three major interlocking components that relate closely to the essential content areas: text, context (and) audience.”⁶⁴ Later, in the text, the authors indicated the influence of “Saussure’s work on semiotics- the study of signs.”⁶⁵ They added that “the codes described in this book are drawn from semiotics,”⁶⁶ that “to have a more thorough understanding of ‘making meaning’ of a text, you need to have information about the audience and the context in which the text was produced,”⁶⁷ and that “current studies of the media involve a cultural studies approach.”⁶⁸

The textbooks for 1C-1D and 2A-2B produced in 2008 advanced matters by providing the three major sub-headings of the MPA course as the main framework guiding study, centred on media language, production context and audience. Those were presented as being interlinked.⁶⁹ That move reflected the claim of American media scholar Henry Jenkins that media education should be reimagined for the exploration of new media literacies. He elaborated, stating that whilst existing media literacy materials presented a powerful vocabulary for thinking about issues of representation and a framework that empowered students to think critically about how the media frames perceptions of the world, these concepts

⁶² Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis 2009 Unit 3A: Media Art Forms*.

⁶³ Keane and McMahon, *Media Production and Analysis: A Resource for Units 3A-3B*. p. x *To the Teacher*.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p. x .

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p. 129.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p. 129.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p. 130.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p. 130.

⁶⁹ J. Keane and J. McMahon, *Media Production and Analysis: A Resource for Units 1A and 1B* (Perth, Western Australia: Impact Publishing, 2009). p. 3.

needed to be rethought for an era of a participatory culture. Overall, his point was that the “social production of meaning is more than individual interpretation multiplied; it represents a qualitative difference in the ways we make sense of cultural experience.”⁷⁰ In Western Australia, the framework in the courses and the textbooks were sufficiently broad to engage with all types of media, namely ‘text, context and audience’.

Conclusion

The concern in this chapter was with the history of media studies in secondary schools from the Year 2000 to the Year 2014 with particular reference to Western Australia. First, the broad historical context was presented. Secondly, general developments in relation to media education were considered. The principal focus of the chapter, namely, media education for secondary schools in WA during this period, was then addressed.

After many unsuccessful attempts, media studies in Western Australia was finally offered as a tertiary entrance pathway, but that was not without its challenges. Digital media technologies developed rapidly, leading media educators around the world to question whether their media studies courses adequately provided enough scope to engage with these technologies effectively in their courses. Consequently, media theorists presented new approaches to analyse digital media technologies, and many were an extension of the cultural theory approach used during the Media 1.0 era.

⁷⁰ Jenkins et al., *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*.

CHAPTER 7

2015 TO 2024: THE CURRENT DAY SYLLABUS

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the history of media studies in high schools from the Year 2015 to the Year 2024, with particular reference to the situation regarding senior secondary schooling in Western Australia. First, the broad historical context is presented. Secondly, general developments in relation to media education are considered. The principal focus of the chapter, namely, media education for secondary schools in WA during the period, is then addressed.

The Broad Historical Context

The period from 2015 to the year 2024 can be divided into those years before and those years after the COVID-19 pandemic, a phenomenon that had a wide and enduring effect on Australian culture, politics, and the economy. The pandemic also created a new wave of moral panic from 2019. Whilst neoliberal pressures continued to resonate in world economies, Australian policy makers continued circulating their rhetoric about Australia's bright future as an innovation nation. Yet, unlike in other developing nations, a demonstrable switch to becoming a 'knowledge economy' was not made.¹ Instead, the Australian economy continued to have a strong reliance on resource exploitation and agriculture, with economic activities closely rooted in the nation's post-colonial history. That was so despite the circulation of the ongoing narrative about the nation's need to shift to a more progressive economy based on science, technology, innovation, entrepreneurship, and competition.²

¹ M. Charles et al., Australian attitudes towards innovation, work and technology: towards a cultural explanation, *Prometheus: Critical Studies in Innovation*, vol. 37, no. 1 (2021) p. 54.

² *Ibid.*

Australia's economic prosperity remained dependent too on mineral and other resources, which made up 58 per cent of all exports in 2018-19, with half of them going to China. That meant that the nation's wealth was heavily dependent on China's continued demand for raw materials.³ Also, there was an enduring contemporary political discourse describing the notion of the 'real' Australian worker as one engaged in manual labour, or at least working in the resources or agricultural industries, and with the 'tradie' stereotype, representing a kind of urban bushman embodying what it means to be an Australian worker.⁴

By 2019, the Australian economy was earning 38 per cent of all its overseas income from China. Indeed, it was the most China-dependent developed country in the world.⁵ Yet, diplomatic relations between Australia and China had been in steady decline from 2017 and were exacerbated by the West's rising tensions over the origin of the COVID-19 virus and fear of the rising political power in China.⁶ That resulted in China imposing various trade restrictions on Australian raw material imports. Moreover, the relationship in later years between Australia and China became further strained, especially as diplomatic relations also declined between the US (an Australian ally) and China during the presidency of Donald Trump.⁷ The Australian government banned Chinese telecommunications company Huawei from entering the Australian market, fearing the implications of the advent of a Chinese 5G network and its potential to allow intense Chinese influence and surveillance of the Australian telecommunications network to take place. As a result, the Chinese government enforced trade

³ Macintyre, *The Concise History of Australia*. p. 322.

⁴ Charles et al., Australian attitudes towards innovation, work and technology: towards a cultural explanation.

⁵ P. Hartcher, *Red Zone*, (Victoria, Australia: Black Inc, 2021).

⁶ M. Pietrzak-Franger, A. Lange, and R. Soregi, Narrating the pandemic: COVID-19, China and blame allocation strategies in Western Europe popular press, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 25, no. 5. (2022). pp. 1286-1306.

⁷ Y. Cai, J. Saadaoui, and Y. Wu, The political relation and trade: new evidence from Australia, China and the United States, *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 69, no. 2. (2022). pp. 1-23.

embargoes on the import of barley, wine, red meat, cotton, timber, lobster, and coal from Australia.⁸

Australia did, however, have rapid development in certain fields of media services. Streaming video on demand (SVOD) had a remarkably swift uptake in the nation, reaching more than half of the population in the five years leading up to 2020. In fact, it was estimated that 78 per cent of Australian television (TV) consumers had viewed content from a video streaming service in 2020.⁹ Netflix rushed to become the market leader in non-linear TV, with an estimated 14 million Australians having access to it in their homes through subscription services.¹⁰

By 2022 there was fierce competition for market share between domestic streaming services owned by multinational mass media and entertainment conglomerates, including Disney Plus, Stan, Amazon Prime, Paramount Plus, Binge and others. SVOD household penetration in Australia increased from 43 per cent in 2018 to 70 per cent in 2021. Also, the growth of demand in video streaming services occurred in parallel with the growth in the number of Australian households with smart TVs, and with faster internet speeds that allowed streaming services to be more easily accessible than previously. Soon, smart TVs were mainstream, with about 80 per cent of Australians having one in their homes.¹¹ However, SVOD services were under no obligation to contribute to the development or airing of

⁸ Cai, Saadaoui, and Wu, The political relation and trade: new evidence from Australia, China and the United States; Hartcher, *Red Zone*.

⁹ Australian Communications and Media Authority and Screen Australia, *Supporting Australian Stories on our Screens- Options Paper* (Canberra, Australia: Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication and the Arts, 2020), <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/getmedia/5d48ef01-b755-4618-80da-297afab1331d/Supporting-australian-stories-on-our-screens-options-paper.pdf?ext=.pdf>; T. Flew and S. Park, Willingness to pay: the future of screen entertainment, *Intermedia*, vol. 50, no. 1 (2022), pp. 26-29.

¹⁰ Roy Morgan Research, *Disney Plus Attracts over 1.8 Million in First 3 Months* (Roy Morgan Pty Ltd, 2020), <http://www.roymorgan.com/findings/8348-subscription-pay-tv-services-february-2020-202003300559>; S. Cunningham and A. Scarlata, New forms of internationalisation? The impact of Netflix in Australia, *Media International Australia*, vol. 177, no. 1 (2020) Pg. 149.

¹¹ Flew and Park, Willingness to pay: the future of screen entertainment.

Australian content. By contrast, Australian commercial free-to-air broadcasters were required to meet the 'Broadcasting Services (Australian Content and Children's Television) Standards 2020,'¹² which had a requirement that 55 per cent of the overall content screened be Australian made. As a result, since multinational owned conglomerate streaming services were not bound by the same Australian content regulations, American content dominated viewing in the country.¹³

In response, a paper published in 2020 entitled, 'Supporting Australian stories on our screens' that was commissioned by Screen Australia, the Australian Government and the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) identified that cinema audiences in Australia were also changing. In it, it was stated that:

Admissions are steady, but the number of films released in cinemas has more than doubled over the last decade, while audiences are increasingly choosing US studio 'blockbuster' films with big budgets and extensive marketing. Independent films from around the world are finding it increasingly difficult to cut through at the cinema, and Australian films are particularly challenged, given the comparatively small size of the Australian market.¹⁴

Concern was being expressed too that media reporting in Australia had started to take on a shift in racist representations, reflecting a fear of 'outsiders.' Constructed within the context of a Eurocentric majority, social anxiety over culturally and linguistically diverse migrants and mistrust towards the ethnic and religious 'other' emerged especially in news media representations. Racism reporting directed toward Lebanese descent groups in the early 2000s was then transferred to highlight the supposed fear of African gangs and Muslims.¹⁵ It became

¹² Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), *Broadcasting Services (Australian Content and Children's Television) Standards 2020* (ACMA, 2020), <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2020L01653>.

¹³ Flew and Park, *Willingness to pay: the future of screen entertainment*.

¹⁴ Australia, *Supporting Australian Stories on our Screens- Options Paper*. p. 8.

¹⁵ F. Mansouri, *The Multicultural Experiment: Premises, Promises, and Problems, Cultural, Religious and Political Contestations: The Multicultural Challenge* (New York, US: Cham, Springer, 2015). p. 8.

apparent that these groups were the newest victims of the accumulation of racially bias attitudes and negative associations in news media.

As part of a global phenomenon since the twin towers attacks in the US in the year 2001, the production of discriminatory reporting in Australian news media escalated in the representation of Muslims, constructing them as a homogenous group at odds with the values of the liberal democratic state.¹⁶ A continuous rhetoric of negative media framing that reinforced existing prejudice and discrimination towards Muslims, portrayed them as the enemy within, and also the conflation of Muslims with terrorism was broadcasted through news media.¹⁷ Much of the news coverage depicted 'radical' Islam as illustrative of broader Muslim beliefs and practices, and the religion was frequently depicted as synonymous with violence and terrorism.¹⁸

Similar media treatment was seen in the representation of members of Australia's South Sudanese communities, with an emphasis placed especially on associating African youths with violence and crime, to the exclusion of all other attributes and factors.¹⁹ The term 'African gangs' became a convenient catchphrase to combine race and crime which was invoked, sustained, and affirmed through media and political reporting. On that, the representation of African Australians in Australian news media tended to be depicted through the dual lens of race and crime and moralised as at odds with Australian values and lifestyle.²⁰ By racializing

¹⁶ A. Aly, Australian Muslim reponses to the discourse on terrorism in the Australian popular media, *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 42, no. 1 (2007). pp. 27-40.

¹⁷ J. Ewart, A. Cherney, and K. Murphy, News media coverage of Islam and Muslims in Australia: an opinion survey among Australian Muslims, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 37, no. 2, (2017). pp. 147-163.

¹⁸ *Ibid*; J. Ewart and H. Rane, Moving on from 9/11: how Australian television reported the ninth anniversary, *Journal of Media and Religion*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2011). pp. 55-72.

¹⁹ G. Han and J. Budarick, Overcoming the new kids on the block syndrome: the media 'endorsement' on discrimination against African-Australians, *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, vol. 32, no. 2 (2018). pp. 213-223.

²⁰ D. Nolan et al., Mediated multiculturalism: newspaper representations of Sudanese migrant in Australia, *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, vol. 32, no. 6 (2011). pp. 655-671.

crimes with an emphasis on the need to protect a particular dominant Australian lifestyle, such media discourses assumed an otherwise crime-free context.²¹

Related to the climate of news violence and moral panic towards racial and religious minorities was the environment in which the mosque attacks occurred in Christchurch, New Zealand, on 15 March 2019. The sheer scale of the response was instrumental in raising awareness of the weaponization of news narratives and how they have the capacity to incite violence towards specific groups of people. The negative messages circulated challenged governments and media institutions in Australia and New Zealand to begin to allay the destructive language targeting specific racial groups.²²

As the wave of COVID-19 swept across the globe and an urgent need to implement containment strategies to contain the virus became apparent, Australians, like those in other nations around the world, were forced to find alternative ways to communicate, work and study without face-to-face contact. Individuals now spent long periods at home as they followed government-mandated virus spread mitigation strategies, including lockdowns. Relatedly, before the pandemic, Australian education policy makers sought to provide students with access to information and communication technology resources. It was mandated that they should have access to computers in school contexts. Also, with computer ownership relatively widespread and with a large majority of children connected to the internet, the social discourse moved from one of provision to one of protection. Of particular concern regarding children were rights over personal data and protection from exploitation. That drove the swing back to a discourse of protectionism.²³

²¹ P. Williams and C. Greenfield, 'Howardism and the media rhetoric of "battlers" vs "elites"', *Southern Review: Communication, Politics and Culture*, vol. 34, no. 1 (2001). pp. 32-44.

²² A. Bogle, Social media deserves blame for spreading the Christchurch video, but so do we, *ABC News Australia* (2019), <https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2019-03-19/facebook-to-blame-for-christchurch-live-video-but-so-are-we/10911238>.

²³ L. Green, Confident, capable and world changing: teenagers and digital citizenship, *Communication Research and Practice*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2020), pp. 6-19.

A rising fear amongst Australian parents as they navigated an extremely fast shifting landscape of technological change played a big role in the shift in the return of discourse to protectionism. Camera recording devices were accessible and distributed more widely than ever. Correspondingly, more than 100 million people watch Instagram Live every day, with over 2 billion monthly active users in 2023²⁴ with 694,000 hours of video being streamed on YouTube every minute.²⁵

General Developments in Schooling and Curriculum Internationally, in Australia and in the State of Western Australia

With the emergence and spread of COVID-19 globally in 2020, the notion of how to conduct schooling changed dramatically. In 2020 and 2021, disruption to learning through school closures, sickness and isolation affected at least 1.2 billion students globally.²⁶ It was in this digitally connected environment that children experienced the impact of COVID-19 and an emerging dependence on technologies for schooling and social connection due to lockdowns and social isolation.

Ongoing effects of COVID-19 sharply exacerbated existing cultural inequities in education as it also did in wider society. In 2021, the OECD argued that “addressing inequities in students’ access to educational provision and learning during and after the pandemic should be a central principle of education systems’ successful recovery.”²⁷ Its members identified the following ten core principles that were central to equitable educational recovery for education systems around the world:

²⁴ J. Badadiya, *70+ Instagram Statistics You Should Know in 2023*, Social Pilot, 18 October, 2023, <https://www.socialpilot.co/instagram-marketing/instagram-stats#instagram-usage-statistics>.

²⁵ S. McLachlan, *23 YouTube Stats that Matter to Marketers in 2024*, Hootsuite (blog) 14 February, 2022, https://blog.hootsuite.com/youtube-stats-marketers/#YouTube_user_statistics. Y. Takeda, *Toward 'more participatory' participatory video: A thematic review of literature*, *Learning, Media and Technology*, vol. 46, no. 4 (2021). pp. 451-464.

²⁶ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Education International, *Principles for an Effective and Equitable Educational Recovery*, (2021), <https://www.oecd.org/education/ten-principles-effective-equitable-covid-recovery.html>. p.1.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Principles for schooling during the pandemic:

1. Keep schools open as much and as safely as possible.
2. Ensure equity and align resources with needs.
3. Provide a remote learning infrastructure which is designed to reach all students.
4. Support teachers in their professional lives.
5. Enable teachers and parents to support learners.

Principles for recovery towards effective and equitable education:

1. Provide targeted support to meet students' learning and social and emotional needs.
2. Co-design a robust digital learning infrastructure with teachers and stakeholders.
3. Empower teachers to exercise their professionalism and benefit from professional learning opportunities.
4. Encourage a collaborative culture of innovation.
5. Learn from national and international evidence.²⁸

A range of related initiatives were taken in the UK during and after the pandemic to ensure education continuity and recovery. They included England's National Tutoring Program that supported schools in employing academic mentors to provide intensive support for students, the aim being to provide 'catch-up' tuition for lost learning as a result of the pandemic.²⁹ Further notable strategies included the provision of professional learning, development and guidance, a remote education hub, and technical support for online learning by various teacher unions, including the National Education Union (NEU) and the NASUWT Teachers Union. A similar initiative promoted by the COVID Education Recovery Group (CERG) established in Scotland, involved key representatives from various stakeholders (the Education Institute of Scotland and other unions, the Scottish General Teaching Council, local authorities, and parents' organisations).³⁰

Another significant education shift in England and Wales throughout the decade arose from the numerous education policy changes driven by former Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, whose vision of education was based on a neoliberal appropriation of the

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 4.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

concepts of social, educational, and cultural capital. He and his allies positioned themselves as advocates for high art and high culture for all, arguing that the study of popular culture was based on an underestimation of students' capabilities. A result was that much of the progress and development of media information literacy in schools was lost due to changes to the English national curriculum in 2014 diminishing learners' rights to engage with representations through popular media.³¹

More recently, under Nick Gibb, British Minister of State and Schools, Gove-type ideas were reinforced through the emphasis placed on the need to acquire 'knowledge.' Through ongoing British media reporting and public debate, there was a discourse that somehow 'knowledge' had been lost from the curriculum over the course of a decade and that was due to a promotion of skills and competencies, as though 'knowing that' was somehow superior to 'knowing how.' On the matter, Cannon observed that "the argument often seem(ed) to come down to a reassertion of the value of 'facts': a collection of substantive statements that children need(ed) to know and be able to regurgitate in examinations; a set of books that they should have read and whose superiority they should be able to demonstrate; a list of famous names that would display 'pride in our country's history.'³²

Developments in the United States were also somewhat dramatic. Schools were closed in March 2020, as nations developed lockdown measures to prevent further spread of the COVID-19 virus. While educators made the transition from engaging in traditional face-to-face learning to using digital platforms for remote teaching, many challenges arose that required quick solutions and changes to policy and procedures to provide equitable and appropriate remote learning to all students.³³

³¹ Cannon, Connolly, and Parry, Media literacy, curriculum and the rights of the child. J. Potter, *Digital Media and Learner Identity: The New Curatorship* (New York, US: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

³² Cannon, Connolly, and Parry, Media literacy, curriculum and the rights of the child.

³³ C. Huck and J. Zhang, Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on K-12 education: A systematic literature review, *New Waves: Educational Research and Development Journal*, vol. 24, no. 1 (2021). pp. 53-84.

As in most OECD countries, the United States established online platforms with learning resources for teachers, students and parents to ensure learning continuity during the COVID crisis before there would be a transition back to face-to-face learning. ‘Edcamps’ were an example of the kind of online professional development that emerged. They were organised by teacher volunteers and were built on the premise that educators could learn from each other to enhance their professional skills with the goal of improving student outcomes.³⁴

Additionally, the ‘Wide Open School’ development offered resources for educators and families aiming to develop not only disciplinary technical skills, but also creativity, critical thinking, and social-emotional skills at all levels. Others simply supported family and informal learning activities. Also, along with offering access to curated resources, the platform developers suggested developing a daily schedule to help students and families have a good balance of activities in their day during lockdowns.³⁵

As a result of the limited infrastructure available for online learning, issues identified were equity in access to reliable technological resources to get online, little time to develop teacher training for online learning, increased workloads, and an inability to keep students on task in an online environment.³⁶ All of that resulted, in various circumstances, in lower self-efficacy in teachers than reported in pre-pandemic surveys.³⁷ A 2020 EdWeek survey, for example, highlighted that nearly a quarter of American students were ‘essentially truant’ and that morale for teachers, students, and administrators across the country had plummeted during the early months of the pandemic.³⁸

³⁴ International, *Principles for an Effective and Equitable Educational Recovery*. p. 11.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Huck and Zhang, Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on K-12 education: A systematic literature review. p. 69.

³⁷ V. Cardullo et al., K-12 teachers' remote teaching self-efficacy during the pandemic, *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching & Learning*, vol. 14, no. 1 (2021). pp. 32-45.

³⁸ Huck and Zhang, Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on K-12 education: A systematic literature review, p. 53.

Changes to the Australian education system during the era in question also created heated public and political debate. That was seen through ways in which rhetoric was systematically utilised by successive Federal governments of varying political complexion to generate a perception of mistrust of and a crisis in news media reporting and through political commentary regarding the Australian education system. Through those lenses, a false perception was developed that presented the national curriculum as a panacea for addressing a wide range of education problems. The narrative purported that a standardised national curriculum would result in greater access, equity, and educational outcomes for all students.

Over time, it became clear that the national curriculum was highly politicised and it came to be seen by some as relating to risk society theory and moral panic theory.³⁹ Moreover, the following themes were dominant in public discourse on education during the period: a neoliberal push to improve school achievement based on a decline in PISA results, heated debate over a Safe Sex national program implemented in some schools, a same sex marriage plebiscite which divided the nation, and the impact of teacher shortages and COVID-19 on the schooling system. Some State and Territory schooling authorities went on to adopt the new curriculum in its entirety and then other States adapted it and integrated it into their existing State curricula. Regardless of the approach taken though, the Australian Curriculum continued to form the basis of all State and Territory curricula. That change then had an influence on aspects of teaching and learning across the nation.⁴⁰

In 2015 too, in Western Australia, the ‘Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline’ replaced the Curriculum Framework for years pre-primary to Year 10. In consultation

³⁹ Rodwell, Enter "risk society": national control and the Rudd, Gillard, Abbott, Turnbull and Morrison years (2007-18). p. 190; G. W. Rodwell, Risk society and school educational policy (London, UK: Routledge, 2019). C. Harris-Hart, National curriculum and federalism: the Australian experience, *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, vol. 42, no. 3, (2010). pp. 295-313.

⁴⁰ ACARA, *A Guide to the new Australian Curriculum- Version 9* (2023), <https://www.oup.com.au/secondary/australian-curriculum>. ACARA, *The Australian Curriculum Version 9* (2022), <https://v9.australiancurriculum.edu.au/>.

with ACARA, Peter Collier, the WA Education Minister at the time, signed an agreement that SCSA writers would adapt and adopt the national curriculum for Western Australian schools, fundamentally with the WA student context in mind. Implementation of arts subjects in all WA schools was then required by 2018.⁴¹ The main difference in relation to the Western Australian adoption was that the curriculum was written in grade levels of achievement (such as for Year 7, Year 8 and so on), instead of in 2-3 year ‘bands’ of achievement as outlined by the Australian Curriculum (such as Year 7 and 8 combined in a ‘band’). This new phase of curriculum development signified a further shift in the history of media studies in Western Australia, as it aligned with media arts across the nation. By 22 April 2022, Commonwealth, State and Territory education ministers endorsed an updated version of the curriculum known as ‘Version 9.0’, with implementation requirements to be undertaken according to different State and Territory timelines.⁴² On that, Pauline White, chair of SCSA, stated in a letter to school principals in April 2022, that whilst version 9 of the Australian Curriculum was available to Western Australian teachers from term 1, 2023

Western Australia has a long-standing history of ‘adopting and/or adapting’ the Australian Curriculum and this (would) continue. The Authority (would) coordinate the collaboration between the school systems and sectors, as it has in the past, to ensure that any changes to the mandated Western Australian curriculum (were) well considered and consulted before being finalised... Until further advised, the Western Australian curriculum, as published in the Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline (<https://k10outline.scsa.wa.edu.au/>) (was) the mandated curriculum for Western Australia and must continue to be implemented in (your) school.⁴³

⁴¹ School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA), *Implementation Requirements* (Perth, Western Australia: SCSA, Accessed 4 March, 2023), <https://k10outline.scsa.wa.edu.au/home/principles/background/implementation-requirements>. A. Blagaich and P. Garnett, *Letter to Principals Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline* (Perth, Western Australia: SCSA, 2015), https://www.scsa.wa.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/74645/Letter-to-Principals-Western-Australian-Curriculum-and-Assessment-Outline.pdf.

⁴² P. Beck, *ACARA F-10 Australian Curriculum Review*, eCircular to Teachers, (Perth, Western Australia: School Curriculum and Standards Authority, May 2022), <https://www.scsa.wa.edu.au/publications/circulars/kto10-circulars/archive/2022/edition-4,-may-2022>.

⁴³ P. White, *Letter to all school principals- Australian Curriculum Review* (Perth, Western Australia: SCSA, 2022), https://www.scsa.wa.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/977990/Letter-all-school-principals-Australian-Curriculum-Review.pdf.

Relatedly, in regard to the curriculum for those in Years 11 and 12 in Western Australia, the final stages of the senior secondary reforms were also implemented in 2015. Those were intended to facilitate bringing about an increase the standard of literacy and numeracy across senior school subjects and to simplify course options.

Under the new system, the stages courses were replaced by ATAR and General courses.

The structure of those was as follows:

- ATAR Courses: examined externally by SCSA and designed for students intended on a university entrance pathway, with combined results contributing to the calculation of a students' ATAR (Australian Tertiary Entrance Rank, used for university admission purposes), and,
- General Courses: designed for students on post-school pathway programs that were more workplace skills focussed, such as TAFE (Technical and Further Education). TAFE provided education pathways that were more directly responsive to practical experience and skill development for those students not intending to enter university,⁴⁴ to prepare those students to be workforce ready. These General courses did not have external exams, but instead used an 'External Set Task' (EST) set by SCSA, which was used as a teacher moderation tool.⁴⁵

Additional courses for those enrolled at senior secondary school level included VET (Vocational Education and Training) industry specific courses, foundation courses (for students with low literacy and numeracy), and preliminary courses for students with learning difficulties or intellectual disabilities. All State and national curriculum developments were a result, in part, of the teacher quality improvement drive of Federal Education Minister, Christopher Pyne, who was responding to Australia's lagging PISA scores in comparison to other developing nations.

⁴⁴ K. Michaelides, *What is TAFE (Technical and Further Education) and How Can It Benefit You?* TafeCourses.com.au (2023), <https://www.tafecourses.com.au/resources/what-is-tafe/>.

⁴⁵ P. Garnett and A. Blagaich, *Chairman and Chief Executive Officer's Foreword, Annual Report 2014-2015* (Perth, Australia: School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2015), https://www.scsa.wa.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/74678/Annual_report_2014-15_Final.pdf.

General Developments in Media Education

In the second decade of the 21st century, whilst the concerns of media literacy education were fading in many places, social media, algorithmic cultures, coding literacies, and creative economies gained prominence as societal interests across the globe. Concerns included a distrust of news accuracy and an awareness of how misinformation was on the rise through online sources. In addition, invasive forms of data surveillance, the rise of authoritarian politics, and unregulated tech corporations with the capacity to shape the path of democratic politics also gained prominence in societal consciousness. Relatedly, since it had been established in various countries, the field of media literacy education always had a deep-rooted history involving questioning issues of power and the actions that were necessary to guarantee a more just distribution of power for the benefit of society.¹ Therefore, the profound depth of media studies and its enduring relevance in addressing the issues that shaped human existence continued to be abundantly clear.²

The convergence of traditional and new media, and profound mediatization during this time reshaped the emerging global media ecosystem, causing a shift away from the mass media's dominant role on society and placing digital media technologies firmly at the centre of people's communication practices. Technology continued to evolve in relation to social and information systems. That, in turn revolutionised content consumption, production, and human communication. Moreover, access to information was no longer random. Instead it was selectively filtered, shaped by user-generated digital metadata and machine learning algorithms. Search results on a specific topic were not accidental; instead, they depended on

¹ Masterman, *Teaching the Media*. Masterman, A rationale for media education. L. Masterman, *Teaching About Television* (Londo, UK: MacMillan Publishers Ltd., 1980). M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-77*, (Sussex, UK: Harvester Press, 1980).

² S. R. Poyntz et al., Media education research in a rapidly changing media environment, in D. Frau-Meigs et al. (eds.) *The Handbook of Media Education Research* (Newark, US: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2020). pp. 1-16.

intricately crafted algorithmic categories and user actions. Those actions contributed to the emergence of the vast reservoir of ‘big data’ that fuelled platforms. The feeling of choice that individuals experienced was built upon the collective actions of numerous platform users, shaping the underlying information structure.³

On the latter, one issue that became apparent was that through the everyday uses of technology by consumers, discrimination was also embedded in computer code through the repetitive recycling of unfiltered dominant ideologies through artificial intelligence technologies. Safiya Noble, co-director of the UCLA Center for Critical Inquiry believed that artificial intelligence would become a major human rights issue in the twenty-first century. She termed the phenomenon ‘algorithmic oppression’ and proposed that it was a common misconception that terms such as ‘big data’ and ‘algorithms’ were seen to be neutral or objective. Relatedly, studies of Silicon Valley and other tech corridors were published that reported that human designed mathematical formulations that drove automated decisions inevitably represented all types of values, and many of these openly promoted racism, sexism, and false notions of meritocracy.⁴ This dramatic shift in the digital ecosystem was identified as the next significant period of global digital disruption and was termed Web 3.0.⁵

Additionally, developments associated with the neoliberal, competitive and technocratic society of the early 21st century included the creation of new, more exciting digital media technologies and devices that were less expensive. Regarding these, the focus in schools in most neoliberal countries was on technological and instrumental approaches to teaching students how to use digital technologies and to develop the skills to master them, and to enable

³ Ptaszek, Media Education 3.0? How big data, algorithms, and A.I. redefine media education. p. 236; T. Graham, Platforms and hyper-choice on the world wide web, *Big Data & Society*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2018) pp. 5-7.

⁴ S. U. Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* (New York, US: New York University Press, 2018). pp. 1-2.

⁵ Jenkins et al., *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*.

teachers to implement these technologies into their teaching practices. The related ‘information communication technology’ literacy was often seen in relation to computer sciences, which was focused on programming languages. This covered a narrow set of practices regarding computers and digital tools or platforms, without necessarily understanding their design, functioning and impact on society.⁶ The result opened up a major gap in education in the area of critical citizenship.⁷ That was because ICT education remained focussed on the skills to use emerging ‘information communication’ technologies, also commonly known as digital media technologies, but did not address the wider implications of these technologies.

Media studies educators on the other hand, were well placed to meet the gap in critical citizenship by taking into account the broader cultural dimensions of citizenship in the digital media ecosystem, as media literacy was about much more than the creation of “information” media. Media literacy involved the mastery of a range of semiotic resources (text, image, sound), with a focus on information and messages that were communicated and their relation to the training of users to develop a critical mind. This was to build the capacity to assess truth in the media and to foster civic agency and democratic participation. On this, it became apparent, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, that the field of online learning needed to be strengthened by drawing upon theoretical and methodological advances. In particular, it needed to incorporate the critical enquiry of online information and to acknowledge the multi-modal dimensions of trans literacy, so as to harness the opportunities that digital convergence created. It could not remain solely at the technological level but needed to translate into meaningful societal uses, to meet the needs of 21st century citizens.⁸

⁶ D Frau-Meigs, Transliteracy as the new research horizon for media and information literacy, *Media Studies*, vol. 3, No. 6 (2012), p. 19.

⁷ A. Gutierrez-Martin and A. Torrego-Gonzalez, ICT and media education curriculum for teachers in the post-truth era, in B. S. De Abreu (edt.), *Media Literacy, Equity, and Justice* (New York, US: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2022), p. 35.

⁸ Frau-Meigs, Transliteracy as the new research horizon for media and information literacy. p. 25.

While media education in many places was being overshadowed by the growing emphasis on simply mastering ICT technologies and cyber security practices, there was a significant expansion of media education policies worldwide, in response to moral panics around radicalisation and disinformation caused by the digital media landscape.⁹ The function of media literacy prompted a re-evaluation of many global education policies. It was acknowledged that media literacy was deemed essential for sustaining a critical outlook on rapidly evolving information and communication technologies.

The revitalisation of discussion around media education policy brought about a recognition of the changing conditions for civic engagement, along with the associated rights and obligations of citizenship. Those included recognizing the choices and responsibilities of individuals immersed in the global media sphere, with a focus on expanding the media studies curriculum to encompass areas such as data literacy, privacy literacy, AI literacy, and more.¹⁰ However, as many steps from policy directives and political will to the effective implementation of a curriculum initiative need to be taken, this did not create a worldwide emphasis on the development of media education. There were constraints diluting its implementation and focus in many places. These included inconsistent levels of coordination at State and local levels, the problem of marginalising media education policy within larger policymaking frameworks, and a post-COVID environment of chronic funding deficits.¹¹

The education response to the new digital landscape, was, as stated already, called Media Education 3.0. It placed a greater emphasis on students' autonomy in not just using and understanding digital media technologies and in the empowerment of their agency, but also in

⁹ Poyntz et al., *Media education research in a rapidly changing media environment*. p. 12.; P. Aroldi, M. Vicente Marino, and N. Vrabec, *Evaluation and Funding of Media And Information Literacy*, in D. Frau-Meigs, I. Velez, and J. Flores Michel (eds.) *Public Policies in Media and Information Literacy in Europe: Cross-Country Comparisons* (London, UK: Routledge, 2017), [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development OECD, the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) evaluation incorporates media education in its global competencies framework]

¹⁰ Poyntz et al., *Media education research in a rapidly changing media environment*. p. 12.

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 12.

understanding the relationships between their online interactions. Ethical digital citizenship became the intended outcome of media literacy in many places.¹² Ptazsek suggested that Media education 3.0 needed to focus on the study of the:

...practices, activities, and motivations of digital media users, referring to such phenomena as digital data, misinformation and online propaganda, distribution of fake news, privacy on the Web, management of users' data, and profiling or communication with non-human subjects (bots); on the other hand, it should propose specific educational activities related to teaching media competence aimed at critical understanding of these phenomena, having an impact on the sphere of mediated communication – meaning the recognition, analysis, and evaluation of learners.¹³

He also suggested an approach that would extend Masterman's classic media education model (Media Education 1.0) which emphasised the analysis of production, ideology, and representation. He also suggested how these concepts related to emerging digital media technologies that shaped information and that were ideological in nature, that operated in an environment managed by algorithms.

As Web 3.0 technologies discriminated, disseminated, radicalised content, strengthened biased opinions, and influenced the way consumers perceived reality, he went on to state, they represented a distorted vision of the world. Therefore, Ptazsek concluded, Masterman's model could provide a lens through which students could understand the subjectivity and bias present in mediated content that existed in this emerging digital network. He purported that the model could shine light not only on media platforms but also on a variety of networked devices whose operation were dependent upon the analysis of collected data about the user's activity.

In an effort to provide clarity on the situation, UNESCO, in 2008, adopted the umbrella term, 'media and information literacy' (MIL), to combine the three distinct areas of media literacy, information literacy and digital literacy into one unified notion. Then in 2019, media and information literacy experts from 22 countries gathered in Belgrade, Republic of Serbia,

¹² D. Frau-Meigs and L. Hibbard, *Education 3.0 And Internet Governance : A New Global Alliance For Children And Young People's Sustainable Digital Development*, Global Commission on Internet Governance paper series; no. 27, (Waterloo, Ontario: CIGI, 2016).

¹³ Ptazsek, *Media Education 3.0? How big data, algorithms, and A.I. redefine media education*. p. 237.

to update UNESCO's model 'Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers' and to consult on the 'Global Standards for Media and Information Literacy Curricula Development Guidelines'. That was followed by regional consultations taking place involving multiple stakeholders from over 80 other countries, representing all regions of the world in its development over 18 months.¹⁴ Out of all of that, a curriculum was published in 2021 that presented a global comprehensive competency framework for media and information literacy, and provided pedagogical suggestions for educators and students to navigate the communication ecosystem with critical thinking and wisdom.

In Australia at this time, news literacy as a critical component of media and information literacy, became a larger focus than previously. An example of this was social media reporting that presented misinformation of the bushfire crisis in the east coast of Australia over the 2019/2020 Summer and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Research showed that during the crisis, programmed bots¹⁵ and human trolls¹⁶ promoted a campaign of disinformation on social media platforms like Twitter, claiming that arson rather than climate change was responsible for the fires. This reflected the rhetoric in disinformation campaigns run by online conspiracy theorists.¹⁷ Such events highlighted the need for Australian society to be critical of such influences. Such examples of non-transparent media systems were often indicative of an erosion of citizen's rights and a lack of social justice represented through news media.¹⁸

¹⁴ UNESCO, *Global Standards for Media and Information Literacy Curricula Development Guidelines* (Paris, France: UNESCO Publishing, 2021).

¹⁵ eSafetyCommissioner, *Trolling* (Australian Communications and Media Authority, <https://www.esafety.gov.au/young-people/trolling>). [Programmed bots are computer programs which pose as human users on online social media]

¹⁶ M. Himelein-Wachowiak et al., Bots and misinformation spread on social media: implications for COVID-19, vol. 23, no. 5 (2021), pp. 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.2196/26933> [Human trolls are when people deliberately try to upset others online]

¹⁷ Dezuanni, Re-visiting the Australian Media Arts curriculum for digital media literacy education, p. 876; T. Graham and T. Keller, Bushfires, bots and arson claims: Australia flung in the global disinformation spotlight, *The Conversation*, <https://theconversation.com/bushfires-bots-and-arson-claims-australia-flung-in-the-global-disinformation-spotlight-129556>.

¹⁸ P. Mihailidis, Civic media literacies: re-imagining engagement for civic intentionality, *Media and Technology*, vol. 43, no. 2, (2018). pp. 152-164.

In comparison to other nations, Australia's media literacy curriculum in the form of media arts in the Australian Curriculum was one of the few international media studies curricula that provided a framework for teaching media studies from pre-school through to Year 10.¹⁹ In addition, media literacy had a significant presence in the Australian Curriculum English studies course, which referenced information and media as core text types for teachers' consideration in their delivery.²⁰ The national English studies curriculum for example, pointed to news media several times in content elaborations for students in Years 6 to 10. The benefit to news being either directly or indirectly studied in English was that the subject was compulsory for most students throughout their schooling, while media arts was an elective subject in primary and secondary schools.²¹

Developments in Media Education in in Western Australia

The Western Australian media arts syllabus was based on the national curriculum and was also written to align closely to the upper school MPA syllabus in WA. The Western Australian media arts course was written for delivery to pre-primary to Year 10 students.

Across 2015 to 2024, various changes to the media studies courses took place that reflected a shift in the development of the subject. However, little change was made to the syllabus in the primary school media arts course, and it was also not a popular subject offering in primary schools during this period. Primary and secondary school administrators were mandated to adhere to the following guidelines in regard to the way that arts subjects were to be offered in their school:

¹⁹ Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), *Media Arts (Version 8.4)* (Sydney, Australia: ACARA, 2018), <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/the-arts/media-arts/>.

²⁰ Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) Australian Curriculum, *English (Version 8.4)* (Sydney, Australia: ACARA, 2018), <https://australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/english/>.

²¹ K. Corser, M. Dezuanni, and T. Notley, How news media literacy is taught in Australian classrooms, *The Australian Educational Researcher* vol. 49, (2021). pp. 761-777.

The Arts curriculum is written on the basis that all students will study at least two Arts subjects from Pre-primary to the end of Year 8. It is a requirement that students study a performance subject and a visual subject.

In Years 9 and 10 the study of the Arts is optional.

In the Arts, it is desirable that schools provide students with the opportunity to engage with all five Arts subjects across Pre-primary to Year 10.²²

The arts subjects dance, drama and music were in the category of performance subjects, and media art and visual art were in the category of visual subjects.

As in previous eras, most primary school administrators chose to continue to offer the existing art subjects that historically existed in their schools before the WA curriculum was implemented, as there was already infrastructure and staffing to support these subjects. These subjects were typically visual art and music. This meant that they could meet the ‘performance and visual’ mandate required of them, with little need for significant change in their schools’ subject offerings. By continuing to offer these already existing arts subjects in their schools, this didn’t require the implementation of a new subject like media arts, with associated costs to support the digital media equipment requirements. At the time of writing in 2024, only a handful of Western Australian primary schools were offering media arts as a subject. Reid described this phenomenon as the “basic tendency of schools is towards the preservation of established practice and schools are fundamentally resistant to change.”²³

Influences on Media Studies Curriculum Development in Western Australia

In 2015, the ‘Stages’ courses for Year 11 and 12 students in Western Australia were phased out and replaced with a new education standards model. The content in stage one and two courses was amalgamated and became the General course designed for vocationally bound students, while the stage three course became the ATAR course, designed for students

²² (SCSA), The Arts.

²³ W. A. Reid, Institutions and practices: Professional education reports and the language of reform, *Educational Researcher*, vol. 16, no. 8, (1987). pp. 10-15.

intending to use their results to achieve tertiary entrance. For MPA, the change in the syllabus content through this development was minimal except for changes to the maximum group size for the practical production submission component of the external examination, some revisions to the wording of the syllabus, and some changes to the structure of the external written examination.

The changes to the content and structure of the General and ATAR MPA courses were revised to provide greater clarity and to broaden the language to incorporate the changing nature of emerging digital media technologies. Summarising the changes for 2024, the writer of the document stated that “refinements have been made to improve clarity within content dot points, increase the emphasis on student production work and to modernise content in line with the changing nature of media.”²⁴ On that, the ‘Production’ sub-heading for each of the units was renamed ‘Industry’ to reduce confusion around student production and industry production contexts. Another example is that the Year 11 MPA ATAR Unit 3, titled ‘Journalism,’ was changed to ‘Influence’ to broaden the language to again better accommodate the changing digital landscape.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the practical production submission was implemented as part of the course after much lobbying from teachers and the Course Advisory Committee.²⁵ It constituted 50 per cent of the external mark for the MPA Year 12 ATAR course, combined with their external written mark. The choice for students in the early years of the submission was that their production submissions could be made by groups of up to six students, submitting one combined production for submission,²⁶ however the statisticians at the Curriculum Council/SCSA held that there was not significant enough discrimination

²⁴ SCSA, *Media Production and Analysis ATAR- Summary of Syllabus Changes*.

²⁵ Curriculum Council, *Senior Secondary Education Statistics (Years 10, 11 and 12) 2009* (Perth, Western Australia: Curriculum Council, 2010), https://www.scsa.wa.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/189078/2009-Statistics.pdf.

²⁶ Curriculum Council, *Media Production and Analysis External Assessment: Production Submission* (Perth, Western Australia: Curriculum Council, 2008).

between students within each group for their combined production submitted to be used for external assessment. This continued to be an ongoing issue in the early years. This issue was investigated in the Garnett Review, with SCSA statisticians stating, “the review of the Practical (production) Submission Examination process for MPA is a result of the Garnett Review which identified the provision of ‘group’ submissions within the practical examination as problematic.”²⁷

Over time, the maximum number of students in a group was limited at first to four and then to three, and in 2014 it was decided that the groups needed to contain no more than two students, although individual submissions were permitted.²⁸ An argument for a shift to individual submissions only of the practical production submission component of the course continued to be made by the Chief Executive Officer at SCSA to the members at CAC meetings. As previously, the media representatives on the committee continued to resist further group size reduction as in earlier years, citing the need for media production submissions to reflect the media industry and therefore group productions. They also had continued concerns about limited resourcing of media equipment in many schools, particularly those from lower socioeconomic areas. The response from the SCSA statisticians, however, stated that there needed to be a better way for markers to discriminate between candidates within a pair.

In response to the latter perceived need, the SCSA appointed media teacher’ working parties whose members trialled options to provide more discrimination between students for

²⁷ School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA), *Media Production and Analysis Practical (Production) Examination Group Submissions* (Perth, Western Australia: SCSA, 2013). [this was the fourth version of this paper. Earlier versions were discussed with the Director of Curriculum and Assessment, the Manager of English, S&E and Arts and the Course Advisory Committee. The process in its development included consultation with the examination’s directorate, the Course Advisory Committee and a Working Party. Earlier versions presented three options. The Course Advisory Committee unanimously dismissed options 2 and 3 as unviable. Option 1 was the preferred model with suggested modifications. This paper presents the refined option 1 as recommended by the Course Advisory Committee].

²⁸ (SCSA), *Media Production and Analysis: Accredited March 2008 (updated 2012) For Examination 2014, Unit 2B Press and Broadcasting*.

the practical production submissions. Instructive was the International Baccalaureate (IB) Film Course, which had a model which provided discrimination between group members in a similar examination context. It described a process that allowed students within the group to work on the production together, then assume designated roles within the production to demonstrate individual group members' understanding of the production process and provide evidence of the students' individual contribution to the production so that it could be externally assessed.²⁹

The proposal to use a similar model was successful. It was then written into the requirements for the MPA production submission requirements. Each group member in the pair was required to nominate primary and secondary production roles that were different from the other group member's roles, and to submit a five-page 'documentation of production process' that explained the emphasis and application of their roles to the external marker. This was designed to assist the marker to judge the same production submission from two different perspectives, and thus discriminate between candidates within the group structure, and meeting the integrity requirements maintained by SCSA statistical processes.

Further, the school-based mark for production was based on two productions, one for each unit in each semester. In acknowledging the time required to produce production and the greater pressure on schools with smaller group sizes for the production submission, this was changed to only one production overall (which was marked internally, and then externally) for both units across Year 12. It was stated that "in the assessment outline for the pair of units, each assessment type must be included at least twice, with the exception of production which must be included at least once."³⁰

²⁹ International Baccalaureate, *International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme Subject Brief The Arts: Film*, International Baccalaureate Organization, (2023), <https://www.ibo.org/programmes/diploma-programme/curriculum/the-arts/film/>.

³⁰ (SCSA), *Media Production and Analysis Practical (Production) Examination Group Submissions*.

Relatedly, until 2022 the external written examination had two sections, namely, a short answer section, worth 30 per cent and the extended response section, worth 70 per cent. For it, students were allocated a working time of two and a half hours.³¹ The short answer section required students to respond to three out of a choice of six short answer questions based on a number of stimuli made available to them six to eight weeks before sitting the external ATAR examination in November. The stimulus materials were sent out to schools to be distributed by their media teacher to every student enrolled in the course.³² A result of the delivery being close to the external examination, was those teachers of media studies, feeling the pressure to prepare their students, then spent significant time in the last weeks of the course teaching the new material to the students in great depth. Also, the time investment was not reflective of the percentage of the exam it represented.

In response to the latter trend, teachers of media studies over the years rallied together through ATOM WA to share resources built around the materials to save time and to support fellow teachers as they prepared their students for this section of the examination. Relatedly, as the MPA course had no prescribed texts, the choice of the stimulus texts chosen by the examining panel writing the examination had the dual effect of not only stimulating the development of resources for the course, but also directing the choice of texts that teachers studied with their students in the following year. Also, many teachers used previous year exams to guide their next year's cohort of students in their preparation for the written exam. Essentially the resources provided an easy starting point for teachers to shape their courses and text choices when preparing their programs each year. Of note, WA Media teacher Chris Gooch started to develop and share with members of to the ATOM WA community the 'infographics'

³¹ Council, Senior Secondary Education Statistics (Years 10, 11 and 12) 2009.

³² School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA), Media Production and Analysis ATAR Course Year 12 Syllabus (Perth, Western Australia: SCSA, 2021).

that he used in class. These became a well-regarded and popular resource used by teachers of media studies in the State over the years.

By 2023, authorities at SCSA had removed the stimulus material component of section one of the written examination. Instead, they favoured of students using the texts studied in class during the year for both sections of the examination. The decision was made to reduce the stress on teachers and students who were preparing for and studying new content at the end of the year. On that, ATOM WA president, Brad Minchin responded by saying that the team would continue to encourage teachers to share resources through ATOM networks to support teachers of media studies in schools.³³

Additionally in 2023, some further examination requirements were revised, based on the trend that was being observed over time. It was that a higher proportion of students across the State were selecting to complete their production submission independently instead of in pairs. One of the reasons was that Year 12 MPA ATAR students were not prepared to risk relying on a partner for production submission in case the relationship had a negative impact on one's ATAR result. Also, the production standard and competition between students were high, with the best productions from the previous year showcased at the ATOM WA 'Perspectives' screening night each year. On this, after years of the CAC members pushing back on SCSA statistician recommendations to reduce the production group size for the external practical production submissions, SCSA authorities finally made the decision to limit it to individual student productions only, commencing with the 2023 delivery of the course.³⁴ It will be interesting to gauge the impact on students from lower socio-economic schools, with less resources.

³³ (SCSA), *Media Production and Analysis ATAR- Summary of syllabus changes*.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Another trend observed over the previous decade was that students were only selecting to produce and submit audio visual productions. By 2022, there were less than five productions submitted in the State that were produced in one of other media production forms available for submission, namely, radio, photography, or digital media. As a result, as part of the 2023 revision of the production submission requirements, the only production type that could be submitted was an audio-visual one. Again, it will be interesting to note the impact of this change, as it may reveal implications for considering future digital media technological developments.³⁵

The 2023 revisions to the practical production submission also reduced the supporting documentation requirements to a maximum of two-pages for the practical production statement. That replaced the former five-page documentation. Additionally, the new revision required students to address a theme and to nominate the focus of production roles, ranked in order of focus, in relation to art direction, cinematographer, editor, and sound design.³⁶

Textbooks and other teacher support materials

Some textbooks were written during the period between 2015 and 2024, that were designed to support teachers and students enrolled in the MPA courses in Western Australia. Two were written by Keane and McMahon. Those were updated versions of the textbooks they had previously written to support the MPA Stages courses. They were constructed to align with and support the changes in the new General and ATAR courses. *Media Production and Analysis: A Resource for Senior Media Students* (2013)³⁷ was written for ATAR students and *Media*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA), *Media Production and Analysis ATAR course practical (production) examination requirements* (Perth, Western Australia: SCSA, 2023), https://senior-secondary.scsa.wa.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/1045879/2023-MPA-Practical-production-Examination-Requirements.pdf.

³⁷ J. Keane and J. McMahon, *Media Production and Analysis: A Resource for Senior Media Students* (Perth, Western Australia: Impact Publishing, 2013).

Production and Analysis: An Introduction (2015)³⁸ was written for General students. They were less closely mapped to the specifics of the course. For example, unlike the earlier books they didn't detail the specific units of the course or explain the grading process. Presumably this was to sustain the longevity of the currency of the books. The content of the textbooks explained and extended the courses thoroughly. The readings recommended in the textbooks explored the shift in new media technologies at the time, giving such examples as 'Media Theories and Approaches: a Global Perspective,'³⁹ 'Global Communication: theories, Stakeholders and Trends,'⁴⁰ 'Newmedia.com.au: the changing face of Australia's media and communications,'⁴¹ and 'The New Media and Technocultures Reader.'⁴² Those addressed emerging themes of new and traditional media convergence, social and global change, mobile cultures and sense of place, transforming cultures, culture jamming, digital piracy, and cyberbullying.

The textbook that was published for ATAR students (*A Resource for Senior Students*) was the first of the two that was written, and it presented some of the emerging discourses around new digital media. It continued the trend of the 3A – 3B 'Stages' textbook and presented Keane and McMahon's critical framework for media analysis in the form of text, context and audience. That applied a cultural theory lens to all media forms, traditional and new media. The authors described the extension of the application of the theory as follows:

In this book we consider how media speak to people in all corners of the globe. The opening chapter is based on the premise that popular culture has always existed, growing from the activities of the people and the way they entertain themselves.

³⁸ J. Keane and J. McMahon, *Media Production and Analysis: An Introduction* (Perth, Western Australia: Impact Publishing, 2015).

³⁹ M. Balnaves, S. Donald, and B. Shoemith, *Media Theories and Approaches : A Global Perspective* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁴⁰ T. L. McPhail, *Global Communication: Theories, Stakeholders and Trends* (Newark, US: John Wiley & Sons, 2009).

⁴¹ T. Barr, *Newmedia.com.au: the changing face of Australia's media and communications* (Sydney, Australia: Allen and Unwin, 2000).

⁴² S. Giddings and M. Lister, *The New Media and Technocultures Reader* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011).

Modern media are an extension of this premise; they allow people to hear stories from around the world and to communicate their own ideas and stories to others.⁴³

The book also gave historical examples and new examples of media. Moreover, it engaged with the phenomenon of moral panic experienced in society as new media forms are introduced. Traditional media forms and examples remained dominant. Also, evidence of cultural theorist influences was maintained and very closely mapped to explaining and extending the course, which had the same focus. As described in the inside cover: “This text has been developed to assist both teachers and students in meeting the required outcomes for Media Production and Analysis for senior students.”⁴⁴ At the same time, new media forms were introduced and explained, and formed part of such analysis examples and activities, such as “use a search engine to find examples of culture jamming,”⁴⁵ and an activity related to social media and piracy stated as: “discuss how digital technologies and social media have heightened the ‘invasion of privacy’ issue.”⁴⁶

The authors further identified some of the issues emerging in the digital media sphere, such as the complexity of censorship online stating that “censorship of media content was easier to control in the old-media environment of broadcasting, television, radio and print. The new media landscape is far more complex,” and that “we live in an age of surveillance, so it is almost impossible to be untraceable or anonymous. It was added that some of the technologies that threaten or distort notions of privacy are:

- CCTV (closed circuit television)
- Mobile phone vision or recordings
- Cookies
- Social media
- Facial recognition software
- Satellite tracking systems
- Mobile phone triangulation software

⁴³ Keane and McMahon, *Media Production and Analysis: A Resource for Senior Media Students*. p. vi.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. inside cover.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p. 134.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 182.

- Infra-red cameras.”⁴⁷

The book published for General students (*An Introduction*) was also an updated version of previous textbooks, with much of the same general content areas, and maintaining consistency with the shift from the Stages courses to the General courses in 2014. The previous ‘Stages’ textbooks had defined the content under the main subheadings of the courses, namely, Media Language, Audiences and Production Context, whilst the new textbooks did not. Rather, they were simply referred to as the focus areas of study entitled media languages, representation and point of view, audiences, media production contexts, and production skills and processes.⁴⁸

Whilst Barrie McMahon was retired and no longer involved in writing the courses, he still had a strong influence on its development and on the textbooks, with the authors of the latter thanking him in their acknowledgements:

Barrie McMahon for his patience and tireless guidance with this book. He was always willing to listen to our ideas and share his profound knowledge of media education. We are grateful for his positive advice, his critical reading and editing, his astute comments and his detailed written contributions.⁴⁹

Also such new and emerging media forms as convergent or hybrid media were detailed in the books. They were described as ‘the merging of mass media with interactive technologies via digital platforms’; digital and online media described as ‘text, graphics, audio and video that are created, distributed and stored on computer’; and social media, described as ‘internet and phone-based applications that allow people to interact and share information.’⁵⁰

At the time of publication, the textbooks were current and forward thinking in their interpretation of and approach to analysing digital media technologies from the perspective of the syllabus. For example, it was stated that:

⁴⁷ Keane and McMahon, *Media Production and Analysis: A Resource for Senior Media Students*. p. 188.

⁴⁸ Keane and McMahon, *Media Production and Analysis: An Introduction*. p. v.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p. i.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p. 1.

Social media allows ordinary people to produce their own messages. UGC or user-generated content expands the communication landscape and empowers people from all walks of life to create their own media hub.

With the rapid growth of smartphone software, the smartphone became a popular platform for social media- a portable mini-computer small enough to fit into a pocket but with the capacity to:

- Store massive amounts of data and
- Converge with other media platforms⁵¹

Comparisons between new and old technologies were also included as was a range of activities to provide a framework through which students could analyse the new media technologies in which they were immersed.⁵²

At a time of rapid change in the digital media landscape, the courses provided scope for engagement with important developments, and the textbooks provided examples for students to engage with most of the associated concepts. Bit by bit the MPA course was beginning to reflect more of the complexity and phenomena of emerging digital culture, not yet manifested or fully understood by many media education theorists.

Many of the essential concepts that US media theorist Hobbs outlined in 2006 that teachers of media studies needed to teach for effective media literacy were included in the 2013 and 2015 Keane and McMahon textbooks. Examples and activities were presented for exploring the internet, mobile phones, video games, and mobile devices. New sources of information such as search engines and blogs were also detailed and new social and economic issues such as identity and anonymity, privacy, and surveillance were foregrounded.⁵³

Responding to requests from teachers, and following a similar approach that was pursued by many other subject area professional associations, ATOM WA also produced a ‘good answers guide’, entitled *MPEG: Study Guide for Written Examination MPA Units 3 and*

⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 10.

⁵² *Ibid.* p. 10.

⁵³ Ptaszek, Media Education 3.0? How big data, algorithms, and A.I. redefine media education. p. 234; Hobbs, Reconceptualizing media literacy for a digital age. p. 100.

4.⁵⁴ This text was produced using selected student responses from the previous year MPA written examination and with the SCSA providing access to samples of work after getting student permissions to do so. A team of volunteer ATOM examination committee members, who were experienced teachers of media studies with ATAR examination marking experience, analysed each of the questions from the previous year's examination, and then wrote annotated sample 'good' answers to provide guidance for teachers and enrolled students of the course. Those texts provided excellent examples of the grading standards, and assisted teachers and students in coming to understand how marks were allocated in relation to the marking key. The practice, however, was discontinued in 2020 due to COVID restrictions, and a new version is yet to be adopted.

Most recently, a series of new textbooks were published by local media studies teacher, Lisa Merante, to support students studying MPA courses. The first book was released in 2022, and is entitled *Media Analysis: Understanding and Applying Media Theory, Year 11 ATAR Media*.⁵⁵ Further books were released in 2023. They are *Media Analysis Study Compendium, Year 11 and 12*,⁵⁶ a *Media Production Journal*,⁵⁷ and *Media Analysis: Understanding and Applying Media Theory Year 12*.⁵⁸

The Year 11 textbook that was released in 2022 was designed so that students could engage deeply with the digital media landscape. For that, rich examples were provided on the MPA syllabus points. Influences cited relating to the media concepts were clear and explicit,

⁵⁴ M. Hall et al., *MPEG: Study Guide for Written Examination MPA Units 3 and 4* (Perth, Western Australia: ATOM WA, 2019). M. Hall et al., *MPEG Media Production and Analysis Exam Guide*, (Perth, Western Australia: ATOM WA, 2018).

⁵⁵ L. J. Merante, *Media Analysis: Understanding & Applying Media Theory, Year 11 ATAR Media*, (Perth, Western Australia: Media and English Literacy Publishing, 2022).

⁵⁶ L. J. Merante, *Media Analysis Study Compendium* (Perth, Western Australia: Lightning Source Inc. 2023).

⁵⁷ L. J. Merante, *Media Production Journal* (Perth, Western Australia: Media and English Literacy Publishing, 2023).

⁵⁸ L. J. Merante, *Media Analysis: Understanding and Applying Media Theory Year 12*, (Perth, Western Australia: Media and English Literacy Publishing, 2023).

and their influences on the MPA course itself were highlighted. Merante, the author, also referenced Quin and McMahon's media codes framework for deconstructing media texts, as presented in their earlier textbooks.

In the textbook too, major communication theories were explored and compared, and a number of those were applied to examining the new digital media landscape. The books also presented extensive case studies to model how to apply the concepts to texts using media terminology and academic writing. Modern social movements were explored, such as Black Lives Matter and #MeToo, and their influence on media, as well as their political influence and ideology, was explored through examining former US President Donald Trump's presidential campaign. Additionally, such media influence issues as fake news, disinformation and misinformation in the context of online media, as well as a new approach consistent with issues arising from emerging digital media technologies ethical decision-making models, were presented.

Trending issues related to Web 2.0 and 3.0 were addressed later in the textbook in the chapter entitled 'Trends and technologies'. That covered electoral interference, data mining, fake news, disinformation and misinformation as well as bots and trolls, citizen journalists, echo chambers and filter bubbles. In addition, technology's impact on popular culture and how trends have shaped popular culture were discussed with reference to numerous contemporary developments.⁵⁹

To support students in their written examination preparation, sample questions were provided to guide students in their study. An example of examination questions on audience and communication theory was as follows:

- Analyse how a preferred meaning is constructed to connect with the intended audience.
- Examine the relationship between text and audience.
- Analyse how the intended audience's expectations inform narrative possibilities.

⁵⁹ Merante, *Media Analysis: Understanding & Applying Media Theory, Year 11 ATAR Media*. p. back cover.

- Analyse how a media text may attract both a mainstream and subcultural audience.
- With reference to communication theory discuss how audiences interpret media work.
- Discuss how a media text is encoded by producers and decoded by the audience.⁶⁰

Also, the textbook entitled *Media Analysis Study Compendium, Year 11 and 12*, was designed to support students studying for the written exams. To that end, flash cards, essay structure templates and terminology explanations were included. The *Media Production Journal* too was designed to provide guidance to students in their production planning, organising, and scheduling.

In the textbooks, instead of referring to Media 3.0 as media scholars have done, the author referred to the 2023 digital media landscape as the ‘4th Industrial Revolution,’ and described it as framed by the “Internet of things.”⁶¹ Merante also provided guidance to students on different types of future study and careers that could follow for those who take media studies. Additionally, she engaged with the latest developments in digital media technologies and suggested how students could engage with such technologies as artificial intelligence (AI):

The landscape is shifting, begin to develop a strong understanding of AI and how you can prompt AI powered tools to get the best creative outcome. Stay informed, seek educational opportunities and hands on experience to position yourself at the top of the market.⁶²

She also provided examples of a range of different resources that provided access to information on AI resources that students could use to enhance their production process. On the whole, she stated: “AI has exploded onto the market. As creatives we can benefit from adding AI powered tools into some areas of our workflow. AI requires human input and specificity of prompts to create engaging content.” Further, she predicted that “a considerable amount of AI will see cost, in the form of subscription payment or a one-off payment, limiting its use.”⁶³

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p. 171.

⁶¹ Merante, *Media Production Journal*.

⁶² *Ibid.* p. 100.

⁶³ *Ibid.* p. 156.

Additionally, ATOM WA continued to provide a significant and active support for WA teachers of media studies. As well, it provided political representation at State and national levels, and it produced a range of resources and services to support WA teachers of media studies. The ATOM examination committee wrote yearly exams for purchase that could be adapted for use in internal examinations on the courses. They also helped in providing an effective moderation tool for teachers who were developing their understanding of the courses. ATOM WA members, too, promoted the sharing of teacher resources through the provision of a website and they organised professional learning workshops and events. One popularly used resource that they also established was a private email 'loop'. That gave WA teachers of media studies the ability to ask questions of the community, to share advice, and to post information about media teaching job opportunities. It was instrumental also in providing connections between those located in metro schools with those in country schools and provided a lifeline for many new teachers of media studies, trying to establish themselves in their careers.

Approach to Assessment

The norm referenced model of assessment continued to be the assessment approach used during the period. Further to this, as part of the *School Education Act Employees (Teachers and Administrators) General Agreement 2021* Clause 64.1, it was stated that “the Department will support the continued development of K-10 curriculum, planning and moderation support materials. This material will take the form of syllabus documents and assessment exemplars as well as the provision of support for moderation processes in and across schools.”⁶⁴ Thus, it became policy to provide comprehensive curriculum support materials for every Western Australian course from the kindergarten years to Year 12. As with all of the courses, Media Arts from pre-primary to Year 10 and MPA for Year 11 and 12, support materials were placed

⁶⁴ Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission, *The School Education Act Employees' (Teachers and Administrators) General Agreement 2021* (Perth, Western Australia: Industrial Relations Commission, 2021), <https://downloads.wairc.wa.gov.au/agreements/sch012.pdf>. p. 57.

on the SCSA website. Those included sample course outlines, assessment outlines, example tasks, grading descriptors, and student work samples to provide clarity for teachers delivering the courses.

Conclusion

This chapter was concerned with the history of media studies in secondary schools from the Year 2015 to 2024, with particular reference to Western Australia. First, the broad historical context was presented. Secondly, developments in relation to media education were considered. The principal focus of the chapter, namely, media education for secondary schools in WA during this period, was addressed.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The principal focus throughout this thesis was on providing an understanding of how, historically, media studies was constructed as a subject for Western Australian secondary school students from 1974 to 2024, including in relation to its development as an ATAR subject. The stimulus for writing it was that this was an area that up until 2024 was relatively unexplored by historians and sociologists. Accordingly, the project was designed to address some of the knowledge deficit in that regard. The outcome is an account detailing four phases of development: these are the 1960s and 1970s: *The Early Years*, the 1980s and 1990s: *A Shift in Pedagogy*, 2000s to 2014: *An Unceremonious Rebirth* and 2015 To 2024: *The Current Day Syllabus*.

The account that has been presented in the previous chapters is now revisited by providing a further analysis of the results that were considered. That is detailed in relation to the three propositions stated in chapter one that were used to stimulate research on media studies for secondary school students in Western Australia. At the same time, it needs to be kept in mind that from the outset the study was not designed such that the testing of these would be a procedural focus. Rather, they were seen as helpful for guiding the research and getting it underway while being open to the study taking other paths as it evolved. Keeping that in mind, it is helpful now to return to them here by way of elaborating on the analysis arrived at overall.

The first proposition, it will be recalled was that the curriculum for Secondary schools in Western Australia for the period under investigation, including for media studies, was not a monolithic entity, but shifting amalgamations of sub-groups and traditions. The second proposition held that in the process of establishing media studies as a subject in Western Australian secondary schools there was a progression from promoting pedagogic and utilitarian

traditions to an academic tradition. The third proposition claimed that much of the debate that occurred about media studies as a subject in the curriculum in Western Australian secondary schools over the period studied can be interpreted in terms of wider conflict both within and between subjects over status, resources and territory. Following the consideration of each of these the chapter concludes with some suggestions for future research. In doing so the importance of examining curriculum history of media studies in order to try to progress media literacy as a vital part of the curriculum for Western Australian secondary students by way of preparing them to be critical digital citizens and ethical prosumers is emphasised.

Second Level Analysis of the Results of the Study

Initially, the present writer engaged in a certain amount of ‘naive induction’ in order to distil themes from the results detailed in the previous chapters. Four major themes, it will be recalled, were generated, one in relation to each sub-period. It was then decided to subject those to further analysis. To that end, as stated above, they were considered in relation to the three propositions noted. The results of that engagement are now presented.

The First Proposition Considered

Goodson hypothesised that school subjects are not monolithic entities but shifting amalgamations of sub-groups and traditions.¹ The importance of these groups within the subject varies over time.

The proposition was rephrased and expanded upon as follows by the present author specifically in relation to the Western Australian context: *The curriculum for secondary schools in Western Australia for the period under investigation, including for media studies, was not a monolithic entity, but shifting amalgamations of sub-groups and traditions.*

Historically, the introduction of any new form of media into society has been the subject of fear and panic. Relatedly, in many countries in the world, media studies had deep traditions in a protectionist approach towards the study of media in response to the perceived threat of its

¹ Goodson, *School Subjects and Curriculum Change : Studies in Curriculum History*.

intrusive influence on society, and particularly on young people.² Especially in the second decade of the twenty first century, heightened anxiety was evident as society grappled with the speed and unprecedented capacity of new media to transform the world and invade the privacy of individuals through artificial intelligence and data mining. Modern priorities for media studies, reinforced by UNESCO, stressed the need for children's development of agency in response to these phenomena.³ Those required young people to not only critique and produce media, but to be agents of change as global citizens. Moreover, those were made all the more possible through the use of new digital media technologies that became more accessible to the everyday consumer.

The origins of media studies in Western Australia, however, did not follow this protectionist tradition. In fact, the introduction of the subject by secondary English studies teacher, Barrie McMahon in the mid-1970s was in response to a general frustration with the existing model of curriculum and pedagogy. The opportunity to establish media studies as an alternative was made possible through new Federal Government funding brought about by a political shift to cater for the changing nature of the student population in Australian secondary schools,⁴ especially that cohort that in previous years would not have been enrolled.

In the early years of media studies in the State the approach was centred around student enjoyment and learning the media by 'doing' media production. McMahon too, set a precedent for future teachers of media in that he took every opportunity to provide much support for teachers and to advance the subject. His passion and dedication, as well as that of Robyn Quin and other WA media teacher pioneers were instrumental in building a strong foundation on

² D. Buckingham and H. Strandgaard Jensen, Beyond 'media panics' Reconceptualising public debates about children and media; J. Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gansta-Rap 1830-1996*. p. 18; M. Barker, *The Video Nasties : Freedom and Censorship in the Media*. p. 11.

³ (UNESCO), *Medium-Term Strategy, 2014-2021*.

⁴ *Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission (Karmel Report)*. p. 14; Quin and Quin, *Media education: the development of media education in Western Australian schools*, p. 116.

which the subject grew over the next fifty years. They built the subject through using such innovative resources as a ‘media caravan’ providing a mobile media production studio for media classes across the state to use. Through it, access to media resources that would not usually be accessible to students in remote schools was also made available. Furthermore, the initiative ensured that students in under-resourced schools could be involved in media production, at a time when associated technologies were mostly unaffordable for schools located in lower socio-economic areas.⁵

On the latter too, whilst digital media technologies became less expensive in the 21st century, instances of economic disadvantage were still having an impact on media studies departments across the State in 2024. For example, schools with limited resources were negatively affected by some of the decisions made by SCSA regarding the course direction. An example of it was a reduction in maximum group size over the years for the Year 12 MPA ATAR production submission. Such that by 2023 the requirement was that production submissions were to be produced by individual students only.⁶

McMahon, Quin and their colleagues, however, championed the development of media studies in WA and provided support to media teachers in a range of instrumental ways. They produced a plethora of resources to help teachers and students build up their subject knowledge during the 1980s, 1990s and into the 2000s. Included was *Little Media: a Magazine for Teachers of Media*, and numerous textbooks to support the teaching of the media studies course. Further, they established the professional association ATOM WA and were involved in writing and developing the syllabi. Also, they represented the subject area at the State, national and international level, and wrote numerous articles on Western Australian media

⁵ Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?* pp. 151-152 [Personal communication between Robyn Quin and Barrie McMahon, September 25, 1973]; McMahon, *Course Outline for Media Education*, pp. 15-17; McMahon, *Mobile Media*.

⁶ (SCSA), *Media Production and Analysis ATAR course practical (production) examination requirements*; (SCSA), *Media Production and Analysis ATAR- Summary of syllabus changes*.

studies in which they proposed recommendations for the field moving forward.⁷ This legacy of supporting fellow colleagues and building the status and legitimacy of the subject was built upon by members of ATOM WA, which continues today. The related tradition of helping others was also modelled by WA media teacher pioneers and lives on through the dedication and passion of their peers in 2024, particularly through their volunteer work in the association and in their generous sharing of teacher resources.

The new era of digital disruption defined as Web 2.0, which was characterised by a celebration of the evolution of the creative participatory possibilities for the everyday consumer, also had an influence on the development of media studies in Western Australia. Particularly significant was that the digital media technologies developed brought about a convergence of traditional media technologies, such as film, television, radio and newspapers, with new online digital media technologies such as streaming services, social media and podcasts. As that began to find a place within the curricula for senior secondary school students in Western Australia, however, it was not without its challenges. For one thing, early teachers of media who had retrained after being teachers of other subjects became complemented by media teachers trained at university. That had the effect of creating two sub-groups, namely, those who were practically trained and those who were more academically trained. A result was one group whose members wanted to continue the tradition of teaching media studies through learning by doing, and another group that wanted shake off this approach to move the subject towards a more academic-focused tertiary entrance subject. The resulting conflict created between various teachers of media was documented in the subject magazine.⁸ It also

⁷ Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?*; Quin, State Conference Report. p. 2.

⁸ End of year examination: alternative media studies examination 1987, *Atom News*.

meant in certain cases that what was prescribed in the course was not necessarily what was taught in classrooms.⁹

In the 2000s, after many years of rejection to the proposals presented by the ATOM WA committee members, the curriculum was approved as one with a tertiary entrance pathway. It could also be offered as a non-tertiary course pathway for those students intending to take a vocational pathway at the end of their schooling. Thus, it was written with both groups of students in mind. The resulting structure continued to be in the critical theory vein of the earlier decade but was also broad enough to allow teachers of media to engage with Web 1.0 or 2.0 technologies when choosing such texts for study as the “impact of networking and the internet on media services and audiences.”¹⁰ Further minor changes were made to allow for the use of new types of traditional as well as newer emerging digital technologies. McMahon’s wife, Jan and fellow writer Julie Keane, who wrote the courses also wrote a series of textbooks to support teachers of media and students to be able to understand what was entailed. Those were in addition to support materials provided by SCSA on their website, as well as ATOM WA’s support for teachers of media.

This media education phase coincided with the shift in technologies to what became known as the Media Education 2.0 focus. Internationally, the media studies community engaged in debate on the best model for developing media studies curriculum to effectively engage with that shift.¹¹ Those like Buckingham, Hobbs and Jenkins, presented various mixed

⁹ Quin, A genealogy of media studies. pp. 101-121.

¹⁰ Curriculum Council, *Unit 1D: Infotainment*. p. 16.

¹¹ Buckingham, D. Teaching the creative class? Media education and the media industries in the age of 'participatory culture', *Journal of Media Practice*, vol. 14, no. 1 (2013). pp. 25-41; D Buckingham, *Teaching Social Media: A Critical Media Education Approach*, David Buckingham Blog, (2017), <https://davidbuckingham.net/2017/11/02/teaching-social-media-a-media-education-approach/>, D Buckingham, *The Media Education Manifesto*; D Buckingham, *Beyond 'Fake News': Disinformation and Digital Literacy*, David Buckingham Blog (2019), <https://davidbuckingham.net/2019/02/27/beyond-fake-news-disinformation-and-digital-literacy/>. Buckingham, Defining digital literacy- what do young people need to know about digital media?; Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*; Hobbs, *Digital and Media*

approaches, which combined the traditional cultural theory lens, and an extension of it to facilitate engagement with concepts emerging in the digital media ecosystem. On that, Jenkins stated that young people in the 21st Century needed to be taught skills to effectively navigate social networks, to be able to merge knowledge within a collective intelligence, for negotiating across cultural differences that form the governing assumptions in different communities, and to resolve conflicting data, in order to establish a clear picture of the world around them.¹² Soon also, the even greater rate of change in the digital media technological sphere that took place in the 2010s and 2020s, encouraged engagement in further debate not just by media theorists but also by ICT theorists, on the best framework for curriculum development to use for this new ecosystem.

As the digital media landscape evolved in the 2020s, international media theorists have also questioned whether the 2.0 media studies approach from a cultural perspective was appropriate to engage with the issues arising from these technological developments. Some of the related issues, such as the impact of AI technologies, data mining, privacy and cybersecurity have only become apparent and better understood in the latter years. Some also continue the tradition of a cultural studies approach to the incorporation of new media technologies. Lisa Merante, a Western Australian media teacher responded in 2022 and 2023 by publishing a series of textbooks to support teachers and students teaching the latest curriculum that is based on a mixed approach involving critical theory, but also promotes engagement with a set of brand-new Web 3.0 concepts. On those, they provide examples regarding how students could

Literacy: A Plan of Action; A White Paper on the Digital and Media Literacy Recommendations of the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy. Jenkins, Ford, and Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture.* D. Buckingham, Media education and citizenship in neoliberal times, in B. S. De Abreu (ed.), *Media Literacy, Equity, and Justice* (New York, US: Taylor & Francis, 2023).

¹² Jenkins et al., *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century.*

engage with such technologies as artificial intelligence, privacy, algorithmic culture and other concepts that were only starting to be understood in 2023.

The Second Proposition Considered

In the process of establishing media studies as a subject in Western Australian secondary schools there was a progression from promoting pedagogic and utilitarian traditions to an academic tradition.

As stated previously, this theoretical position was informed by Beeby's stages of development of education systems.¹³ It focused on the role of the teacher in facilitating progress through four key stages: the 'Dame School Stage', the 'Stage of Formalism', the 'Stage of Transition' and the 'Stage of Meaning'. The first teachers of media in Western Australia in the 1970s, were already university-trained teachers with a specialisation in such subject areas as English, humanities, social sciences, and design and technology. They were retrained in media studies production practice through McMahon's informal media production workshops. Therefore, they were already in Beeby's 'Stage of Transition'. They were not in the 'Stage of Meaning' because they had been retrained in a media studies teaching approach where there was only a narrow focus on media production techniques. At this point, 'learning by doing' was emphasised as part of a discourse of having fun.

Teachers of media in WA in the 1980s continued in the 'Stage of Transition.' They continued to receive further informal basic training in media production skills. McMahon and his team supported their further development by producing textbooks and support materials, and giving advice to help them understand the sociocultural approach of media studies practice dominant at the time. They also worked to help them to integrate the theoretical aspects of media studies into their teaching practice also.

As the teacher support provided continued and the curriculum was developed, many teachers began to embrace the theoretical aspects of the course and the related textbooks

¹³ Beeby, *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries*.

wholeheartedly. There was also a number of teachers who rejected these, preferring to continue with a 'learning by doing approach'. Thus, two groups of teachers in conflict, as described earlier, started to emerge, namely, that whose members were production-only focussed, and that whose members were both production and theory focussed.

Finally, in the 1990s and beyond, teachers of media began to be trained as media studies specialist teachers at universities, particularly at Murdoch University and at what later became Edith Cowan University. Now they entered the 'Stage of Meaning' as they were well educated and trained in cultural theory and in more sophisticated media production skills. During this period also, though, the divide between those teachers wanting to move media studies to a tertiary entrance subject and those that wanted to continue the 'learning by doing' tradition grew wider.

Over time, the syllabus and textbooks produced reflected changes in international media education theory. Yet, indications are that what was prescribed in the courses and the textbooks and what was taught in schools was often quite different. Those teachers preferring to focus on production continued to do so and ignored some of the theoretical aspects. Whilst the subject remained a non-tertiary entrance subject, this provided those teachers with the freedom to neglect the theoretical depth of the syllabus as it was poorly scrutinised by the education authority.¹⁴

Finally, in 2007, media studies was approved as a subject that could be used for tertiary entrance purposes. The course was entitled MPA to emphasise the dual focus intended to reinforce a curriculum based on more than production, and thus reinforce its new high status as a legitimate tertiary entrance subject that was not just for lower ability students. The suggestion was that academic rigour would come from a combination of textual analysis as well as through media production. The newly written syllabus, with its use of academic

¹⁴ Quin, *A genealogy of media studies*, p. 113.

language based on a cultural theory paradigm, was to be taught to develop within students a specialist lens through which they could critique the world using subject-specific media language. That corresponded with the notion of Young that this type of construction is characteristic of high-status subjects that seek to accentuate their abstractness from everyday life.

In the early years of the MPA course there was a written external examination. That was revised over time, based on feedback received from representatives from the CAC and teachers of media through ATOM WA. Over the same period, tension amongst teachers of media in Western Australia also increased. Moreover, for many students, as film making was their strength and passion, but because there was only school-based assessment for production within the course structure, they felt that their practical work was not being valued within the subject because that aspect of the course was not judged by external examiners.

Following successful lobbying by teachers, the practical production component eventually became externally assessed from 2009.¹⁵ Unlike other arts tertiary entrance externally assessed practical examinations during this period, media production for external tertiary entrance assessments for MPA could be conducted in groups of up to six members. That constituted a unique attraction for students.

Soon, however, the SCSA statisticians deemed the latter situation to be problematic. As with all external ATAR assessments, the MPA assessment was designed to discriminate between student achievement and to rank students accordingly for the purpose of generating a discrete mark. What eventuated over time, though, was a tendency amongst some groups for the paperwork to look almost the same for each member, which meant that the external marker was not able to discriminate between the different levels of achievement within the group.

¹⁵ Council, *Media Production and Analysis: Accreditation Draft 2008*. p.9

As a measure to resolve this issue, SCSA statisticians recommended reducing the group size for production submissions. Over the next couple of years, that issue was raised at the CAC meetings to be considered and endorsed. The group, made up of WA media teacher representatives from each schooling sector, however, fought fiercely to continue to allow students to submit their work as a group on the grounds that it would add pressure to a media departments' technical and time resources in each school. It also was perceived to be a move that would significantly advantage those in higher socio-economic schools and disadvantage those in lower-socio economic, more predominantly government schools. As a result, authorities from SCSA allowed groupwork to continue for a few years. Gradually, however, it was reduced until by 2023, only individual submissions were permitted.¹⁶

The Third Proposition Considered

Much of the debate that occurred about media studies as a subject in the curriculum in Western Australian secondary schools over the period studied can be interpreted in terms of wider conflict both within and between subjects over status, resources and territory.

Since it was first established, media studies in Western Australia struggled to maintain a high status amongst the teaching community for a number of reasons outlined below.

A Mickey Mouse subject

When media studies was introduced in 1974, it was designed to meet the needs of a student population intended for vocational pathways. That and having the catch phrase, 'Mickey Mouse' promoted on program t-shirts for teachers in McMahon's media production programs of the 1970s had an enduring effect on the way media studies came to be seen in the teaching community for years to come. Specifically, regarding the image, having Mickey Mouse holding a camera was meant to emphasise the ease with which teachers of all subject areas could learn media skills to teach media studies. That though, had the effect of consolidating it over the next

¹⁶ (SCSA), *Media Production and Analysis ATAR course practical (production) examination requirements*.

two decades as an ‘easy subject’. In fact, the legacy of the image had the effect in later years of reinforcing a view of the subject as not providing appropriate rigour for a tertiary entrance subject.¹⁷

Media analysis inclusion in English Studies

In addition to established media studies courses in schools, media analysis was a component that was also written into the WA English course in the 1980s. That created controversy amongst teachers of English at the time, as they felt threatened about the movement away from traditional texts and towards new text types from popular culture. Modern media text types were not considered by many teachers of English to be a worthy field of study. While some teachers of media saw the move as a victory and an acknowledgement of the value of media literacy through its inclusion as part of the high status and compulsory subject that was English studies. Many teachers of English, on the other hand, saw it as a threat to the nature of their subject that had been structurally stable in Western Australian schools for half a century. The conflict that manifested itself was a further example that illustrates Goodson’s hypothesis of school subjects being contested social phenomena.¹⁸

Media studies is an unpopular subject offering in primary schools

A further issue that plagued media studies over the last five decades was the limited uptake of media arts in primary schools across the State. At the time of writing, there was only a handful of primary school teachers teaching media studies in their classes across WA primary schools. One of the reasons for that situation could be the belief that the primary school curriculum is already overcrowded. It may also be that teachers fear using new digital technologies that they

¹⁷ Quin and Quin, *Media education: the development of media education in Western Australian schools*; Quin, *A Socio-Historical Study of the Construction of Knowledge in Secondary Media Education in Western Australia- Whose Knowledge?*

¹⁸ Goodson, *School Subjects and Curriculum Change: Studies in Curriculum History*.

may not feel very competent using. Costs of establishing a new subject could also be seen to be prohibitive.

When media studies was located with the broader subject area of the arts within the National Curriculum Framework in 1998, it provided scope for the subject to be taught in primary schools for the first time. It was also a time, however, when there was little implementation support for teachers from Curriculum Council, even though it was a radically different type of curriculum that used outcomes as a marker for achievement. At the time also, teachers and school administrators felt overwhelmed by the burden placed on them to learn a new way of teaching and assessing. It was not surprising, then, that given the choices available to them, primary school administrators chose to continue to offer the same arts options that they already had been offering, like music, art and drama¹⁹ as they already had staffing and infrastructure to accommodate them.

Media studies' identity crisis

The significant digital technology advancement that took place at the turn of the century was seen as a major period of 'digital disruption.' The convergence of such traditional forms of media as television, film and radio with such digital forms as apps and social media, available through the internet, was defined as "the convergence between the computational logic characteristics of computers and the communicative logic characteristics of the media."²⁰ There was much debate amongst media and social theorists about how to define the change. New associated terms included 'digital' media, 'online' media, 'social' media and 'new media'. Soon, as a result, media studies was beginning to experience an identity crisis. That was

¹⁹ Curriculum Council, *Curriculum Framework for Kindergarten to Year 12 Education in Western Australia*. p. 100; Alderson and Martin, *Outcomes based education: Where has it come from and where is it going?*; Leggett and White, *Waves of change: the critical role of assessment, reporting and accreditation in secondary curriculum reform in W.A. 1975-2005*; Lee, *Outcomes-based education and the cult of educational efficiency: using curriculum and assessment reforms to drive educational policy and practice*; O'Donoghue, *Understanding Contemporary Education*.

²⁰ Siapera, *Understanding New Media*.

because through the convergence the definition of ‘media’ was blurred and a general confusion in the community regarding what students studied in this field of knowledge was created. In relation to those who teach media studies in Western Australia, which allows a large scope of texts and approaches to choose from, can be daunting for teachers. Thus a new marketing approach is required for media studies to clarify its purpose and potential to meet the needs of 21st century students and to provide more support and examples of how the subject can be implemented into classrooms.

In the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s students of media education had studied and produced traditional media forms such as radio, film, television, radio and print media. That era was defined as one of Media Education 1.0. Then, at the turn of the century, with significant changes in digital technologies, the notion of Media Education 2.0 was defined. That aligned with the development of Web 2.0 technologies. It was an era that had a significant impact on the way in which citizens communicated, especially through online platforms, social media and smart phones. In 2008, UNESCO defined from a global perspective the literacy that resulted from the study of these convergent media forms as existing under the one umbrella term of, ‘media and information literacy’ (MIL). That combined three distinct areas of media literacy, information literacy, and digital literacy, into one unified notion.²¹

Not long after, a second era of digital disruption occurred in the 2010s and 2020s, as Web 3.0 technologies emerged and as their impact on society started to be understood. The further convergence of traditional and new media and profound mediatization during this time reshaped the emerging global media ecosystem, with the mass media's dominant role in society shifting so that digital media technologies were placed firmly at the centre of people's communication practices. Moreover, access to information was no longer necessarily random.

²¹ UNESCO, *Global Standards for Media and Information Literacy Curricula Development Guidelines*; Ptaszek, *Media Education 3.0? How big data, algorithms, and A.I. redefine media education.*

Instead it was selectively filtered, shaped by user-generated digital metadata and machine learning algorithms.²² The urgency of a need for related media education was highlighted in societal discourse focused on challenges related to such issues as news accuracy and misinformation, data surveillance, the rise of authoritarian politics, the influence of unregulated tech corporations with the capacity to influence democratic politics, and the enduring consequences of social inequalities within and between societies.²³

The education response to this emerging digital landscape was termed Media Education 3.0 by many media theorists. Great emphasis was placed on students' autonomy in not just using and understanding digital media technologies and in the empowerment of their agency, but also in understanding the relationships between their online interactions, and to foster ethical digital citizenship.²⁴ This movement was represented in developments related to the media studies curriculum for senior secondary school students in WA.

In Western Australia too, media studies, as in other places, was separated from 'information communication technology' (ICT) or 'Digital Technologies' studies. They were considered to be discrete fields of knowledge. ICT literacy was mostly seen as relating to computer sciences which was focused on programming languages, and which covered a narrow set of practices regarding computers and digital tools or platforms, without necessarily understanding their design, functioning and impact on society.²⁵ Whilst overlooking the potential of media studies to create critical digital media literacy in students, school administrators in WA increasingly outsourced the training of their students in online safety and participation, and ethical online use to private sector agencies. This trend has had the result of

²² *Ibid.* p. 236; Graham, Platforms and hyper-choice on the world wide web. pp. 5-7.

²³ Poyntz et al., Media education research in a rapidly changing media environment.

²⁴ Frau-Meigs and Hibbard, *Education 3.0 and Internet Governance : A New Global Alliance for Children and Young People's Sustainable Digital Development*.

²⁵ Frau-Meigs, Transliteracy as the new research horizon for media and information literacy. p. 19.

opening a major gap in education in the area of critical citizenship.²⁶ Improved marketing of media studies to provide clarity to WA school administrators about its potential to meet this need for students more holistically by developing critical literacy is essential. As in other places, the Western Australian media studies curriculum and corresponding support materials are already developing content and scope to encompass related areas such as data literacy, privacy literacy, AI literacy, and more.²⁷

Recommendations

Based on the findings in this study, I propose the following recommendations for media studies in Western Australian schools.

Recommendation 1

A rebranding of media studies in Western Australia to provide clarity around what is studied in the course and how it can support students to create, celebrate, understand and be critical of the digital media world in which they are immersed is required. A greater emphasis on professional development and the production and dissemination of support materials is also needed to be provided to primary school teachers with support regarding their understanding of the content and pedagogical approaches of media studies. This could be provided by secondary school media teacher specialists, by SCSA and by ATOM WA. Greater clarification of how the skills taught in media studies could produce media literacy in students is also needed. Furthermore, the production of a media arts primary school textbook is needed to provide teachers with examples of practice.

²⁶ Gutierrez-Martin and Torrego-Gonzalez, ICT and media education curriculum for teachers in the post-truth era. p. 35.

²⁷ Poyntz et al. Media education research in a rapidly changing media environment. p. 12.

Recommendation 2

A shorter timeframe for review of the media studies curricula is required, as an ongoing arrangement. This is because of the rapid change that takes place in digital media technologies. Instead of the typical 4 to 6 year cycle for curriculum revision which exists for subject review at SCSA, a 2 to 3 year cycle pertains in 2024. A case needs to be made as to why this is a specific need in relation to media studies. Additionally, new media literacy frameworks for developing media studies need to be considered based on new and emerging theoretical models that engage with the convergence of traditional and new media forms.

Recommendation 3

A greater promotion of media literacy across the curriculum in primary and secondary schools is essential. Currently there are seven ‘General Capabilities’ which are overarching priorities of focus across the Australian Curriculum. Version 9.0 of the Australian Curriculum has renamed the General Capability ‘Information and Communication technology (ICT) capability’ to ‘Digital Literacy.’²⁸

As WA adapts and adopts the version 9.0 in the coming years for the Western Australian context, there needs to be greater consideration of how to adapt this capability to provide appropriate support to teachers to be able to teach digital media literacy across subjects in WA. Greater emphasis, investment and professional development for primary and secondary teachers is needed to effectively implement digital media literacy across subject areas.

Conclusion

This thesis could also act as a model for those wishing to engage in much further work in the field of curriculum history. While it focussed on the preactive curriculum, an investigation of the interactive curriculum in media studies and in other school subjects could build on the work

²⁸ (ACARA), *The Australian Curriculum Version 9*.

undertaken. Further, it is suggested that there is considerable potential for such research not only at the State level but also at the national and international levels. In the fullness of time, all such work could also collectively make an important contribution to understanding the fields of curriculum design, curriculum development and curriculum innovation. That is to argue that by studying the history of the media studies curriculum one can increase one's awareness and understanding of education change.

The research reported throughout this thesis responded to this view in providing the first comprehensive study of secondary media studies curricula in Western Australia since Quin's thesis in 2001. Thus, it has presented the next chapter of media studies curriculum history in this State.

To hold to this is to subscribe to Grumet's declaration that "as curriculum theory strives to clarify the relations of the known to the unknown, of subject and object, of generations to each other, its propositions⁰ assume distinct positions on a continuum of past, present and future."²⁹ This thesis explored some of the key social, cultural and historical positions held by media teachers, authorities and students across the continuum of media studies' history in Western Australia from 1974 to 2024, through media education eras 1.0, 2.0 and then towards the emerging era of media education 3.0.

²⁹ M. R. Grumet, Restitution and reconstruction of curriculum experience: An autobiographical method for curriculum theory, in M. Lawn and L. Barton (eds.), *Rethinking Curriculum Studies* (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2019). p. 115.

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