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Media Education in Europe

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### **Evaluating Media Education**

Why is media education important ? – The answer to this that it is more important than ever because the culture of children and young people to-day has become media culture.

No matter where they live in the world young people turn to the new media and communication culture with the same curiosity, and they easily obtain media competence.

The media culture of children and young people is global and – if they have media – and internet – access we find more or less the same patterns among young people all over the world.

Among people especially interested in children such as teachers, parent, researchers, marketers etc. there exist different opinions of how to consider a child:

Is the child vulnerable or competent ? – This two perspectives are based on an opinion of children either as human becomings or as human beings. If you consider a child as a human becoming he/she is considered as a creature who is on his/her way to become a reasonable adult, whereas the other point of view considers the child as being somebody in his/her own right.

Maybe the truth is to be found somewhere between the two opinions ...

Much focus is increasingly put on children in these years because they are considered as new target groups, as it is a well-known fact that children dispose of their own money and that they have influence on the consumption of the family. Children have many different names to-day such as innovators, early adopters, generation Y or tweens (8-12 year olds).

During the last 3 years the Danish Ministry of Education has supported a wide range of media education projects all over the country. Two of these have taken place south of Copenhagen in Brøndby and Albertslund and have been evaluated by Ole Christensen and myself.

The projects are rather different, the first one is focussing on training of teachers, of how experienced media teachers can or cannot train their colleagues, whereas the second one is focussing on the practice of media education in primary and secondary school.

Brøndby has a long tradition for media education which means that various development projects have been carried out since 1990. This means that there exists several very experienced media teachers in different schools.

In the Brøndby project which took place from 2002-2003 17 experienced media teachers have been training their colleagues in how to practice media education 5 schools were involved – and 40 teachers have been trained. In each of the 5 schools a MIT-team was established (Media and Information technology) as a team of teachers who were going to train their colleagues.

During the period of 1½ year we were analysing the Brøndby project.

Important aspects in our work were the following:

- How do colleagues train colleagues? – what about their media competence in relation to their competence in relation to the “own” subjects such as for instance Danish, Art or English?
- To which extent do the teachers have a critical reflection on their own media education practice?
- Integration of media in the school (it is now compulsory in relation to almost all subjects in primary and secondary school)
- The organisation and cultural tradition of each of the schools

The research methods used were questionnaires, interviews, observation, stories written by pupils, teachers and members of the MIT-teams about the practice of the media projects they had been involved in.

Regarding the Albertslund project this was a project with focus on how media education is practised in the classroom – with focus on media production.

The aim of our evaluation was to

- collect, analyse and make interpretations of the media education practice
- to develop a dialogue between the teachers involved

5 schools and 34 teachers were involved in the project and what we were looking at was media education defined in a broad sense i.e. from print media to multimedia and with equal focus on media production and analysis.

Central themes for the teachers were “how to localize the competence of the pupils in relation to media and Information technologies. Accordingly we made our analyses with emphasis on:

- The relationship between practical work, analysis and pedagogical approach in the classroom
- The role of the media competences of the pupils (which were often very technical)
- The generation gap
- The gender differences

The research methods were the same as in the Brøndby project.

We have now finished our work and written two reports which we will try to make to a book with relevance to media education teachers and students.

As a conclusion regarding evaluation of media education projects I will point at the following:

- Differences in competences (theoretical and practical knowledge and insight)
- Gender and age differences (in relation to teachers and to pupils)
- Cultural, pedagogical and linguistic differences (especially in relation to projects involving different countries)
- Awareness of your own role as an evaluator