

FINNISH MEDIA EDUCATION

best practises



MEDIA EDUCATION PROJECTS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MEDIA EDUCATION FIELD

There is a wide variety of actors in the media education field in Finland. Besides schools, media education has taken its place in youth work, library services and early childhood education. Non-governmental organisations play an exceptionally important role. In Finland, media education work is carried out wherever children and young people are: not only in schools but also in different virtual communities and game worlds. Functions and projects are developed in both official languages, Finnish and Swedish.

Various non-governmental organisations maintain an active cooperation through which media education is implemented directly in the field. These activities are chiefly project-based. The aim has been to integrate any good practices created in the projects into the basic work of the different actors. In addition to good practices, the projects have yielded concrete work guidelines, reports and research information, which has formed the basis of further activity. One of the main tasks of The Finnish Society on Media Education since its establishment in 2005 has been the charting of Finnish media education projects and supporting cooperation and networking

between different organisations.

The representatives of the field and the financiers share a common understanding: the development of civic and information society skills can be furthered through media education. The advancement of this important issue is actively supported. The Ministry of Education provides funding for a significant part of Finnish media education projects. In addition, other ministries fund projects concerned with issues that fall under their respective jurisdictions. The European Union, national foundations and Finland's Slot Machine Association also grant financial support. The euro amounts range from a few thousand to hundreds of thousands.

This brochure highlights some successful Finnish projects and innovations that have furthered the cause of national media education. Some of these projects have concluded but they have brought into being permanent practices and guides, which support the professionals operating in the field.

Further project descriptions and updates of the contents of this brochure can be found online, at www.mediaeducation.fi.

MEDIAKASVATUS.TV WEB SERVICE

The mediakasvatus.tv web service, a podcast focusing on media education-related issues, was launched in 2008. The objective of the service is to create a collectively developed and produced current affairs forum on media education and communications, for the benefit of teachers, students and parents. The site hosts a wide variety of video, audio, and blog content on issues related to education, media education and communications. Mediakasvatus.tv is developed and edited by a multiprofessional team of media educators, who produce content on a voluntary basis.

Finnish Society on Media Education

The Finnish Society on Media Education is an organisation whose purpose is to promote multidisciplinary research and practices of media education in Finland. Among those involved in the Society's activities are teachers, child and youth workers, librarians, early childhood educators, representatives of media and culture, researchers and students of the field. The network of the Society comprises hundreds of companies, associations, unions, cultural organisations involved with child and youth work, and private individuals from various vocational branches, from all over the country. From an international perspective, the Society's activities are without equal: it operates in a multi-professional manner, combining research and practice with different branches of science. The working languages of the Society are Finnish and Swedish.

Some of the important functions of the Society are to inform, organise events, publish material, implement research and development projects, propose initiatives to further media education, and develop international relations between representatives of the field. It has representatives in important bodies and working teams concerned with teaching and education, and nationally acclaimed authorities are represented in the board of the Society. Another significant function is international cooperation with organisations that promote media education: the Society is a partner organisation of media education

networks such as NORDICOM and UN-Alliance of Civilizations Media Literacy Education Clearinghouse.

A portal for media educators produced and maintained by the Finnish Society on Media Education, www.mediaeducation.fi, was launched in the autumn of 2007. The site caters to the needs of people interested in media education and provides support to media education professionals: teachers of children and youths of all ages, researchers, students, educators, and parents of children and young people. The site is updated in three languages: Finnish, Swedish, and English. The Ministry of Education funds the online service and it is part of the Children and Media Action Plan.

The portal combines elements of practice and research. An extensive information package on media education in Finland is available on the site, along with helpful materials and tools for the use of media educators. The website functions as a channel for news and event information and as a networking platform for actors in the media education field. Finding the right information in the site is easy with the help of the various different search functions. The users of the service can develop the site, discuss different topics and, for instance, leave comments on blog postings as well as submit their own materials to be viewed by other users. A newsletter with information on media education, which comes out twice a month, is also available for subscription on the site. The newsletter is published in both Finnish and Swedish ●

1. MEDIA EDUCATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The Media Muffin project

Media Muffin (2006-2007) was a nationwide project, aimed towards developing the media skills of young children and their educators. The Centre for School Clubs, Koulukino (School Cinema) and the Media Education Centre Metka were the major contributors in realising the project. Media Muffin was part of the Children and Media programme funded by the Ministry of Education. One of the key accomplishments of the project was a publication titled *Media Education in Early Childhood Education*, a guideline for day-care personnel. The publication describes the values, targets and objectives of the early childhood education plan from a media education perspective. The goal was to further the municipalities' and day-care centres' ability to adopt media education as part of the early childhood education work as well

as to support the planning, implementation and evaluation of media education. In 2009, the Centre for School Clubs published *Media Education in Pre-Primary and Primary Education*, a document supplementing the series of media education guides for early childhood education.

The project produced materials and developed training for early childhood educators, giving them information on how to develop and improve the media skills of under school-age children. The materials consist of reading matter, suggestions for activities, and ideas to reflect on about the world of media and media education. The materials can be utilised in day-care centres, schools and school clubs. The project reached several thousands of early childhood education professionals and the materials were distributed to every day-care centre in Finland. The object of the training sessions was to equip educators with basic information on the concepts of media education, give guidance on putting media education into practise with a group of children, and give information on the basics of safe media use ●

2. MEDIA EDUCATION IN CULTURAL WORK

Media Education Work in Libraries

Finland is known for its comprehensive library network, high user and lending rates and effective use of technology and information networks in libraries. Public libraries have a significant role in media education. Teachers, schools and homes require support in putting media education into practice, and libraries are able to provide that support in many areas.

From the libraries' point of view, media education is not limited to maintaining traditional literacy skills and giving advice on information retrieval skills. It is equally important to acquaint the customer with the utilisation of new media and web services, as well as the critical evaluation of information. The aim of media education work in libraries is to support the information management and media and information literacy of children and young people. Libraries are aware of current trends in

the changing media environment and the world of digital games and gaming. Libraries also offer support in the utilisation of social media as well as information security issues.

During 2006-2008, the Finnish Library Association implemented a Ministry of Education funded media education project, the purpose of which was to educate librarians in appreciating the changing media environment and working as advisors to children, young people and adults in libraries. The project enhanced the librarians' awareness of new trends in the media environment through comprehensive training and media education activity packages. Training sessions were held across Finland.

In 2009, a new, even more extensive project will continue to develop media education work in libraries, especially focusing on the education of children. The Children, Media and Libraries project is a joint effort between the Finnish Library Association, the Helsinki City Library and the State Provincial Offices. The project consists of the formation of a regional trainer network,

organisation of training events, production of materials, setting up a media education website directed at library professionals, and establishing a portal designed to activate children.

In addition to project work, children and young people's media world is part of the everyday work in libraries. Libraries offer guidance to customers in matters of information retrieval and management, as well as issues related to web services. They also organise controlled game nights for children and young people as well as courses in the use of website communities and internet phone calls, to name a few.

Print Media as a Support Tool in Media Education

Literacy and reading are considered important national resources in Finland. Aikakausmedia - Finnish Periodical Publishers' Association and the Finnish Newspaper Association are the major print media organisations. The Finnish Book Publishers Association has also produced media education materials related to the reading of books. Media education forms a part of these organisations' activities, and it is practised in cooperation with newspaper publishers, education administrations, teachers' associations and various actors in the media education field. Newspapers and periodicals play an important role in Finnish schools. The information that they give is new and up to date, and provided with a many-sided background. Many schools also produce a school newspaper, either in print or as an online version.

The Finnish Newspaper Association and the 200 newspapers currently published in Finland give suggestions to teachers on how to use newspapers in schoolwork. Finnish newspapers have an almost 50-year tradition of cooperation with schools. The work done in different periods has depended on what the schools have emphasised and what additional information the teachers have required. Publishers have appointed their own liaisons to whom orders for newspapers from schools are directed, as well as designated personnel to coordinate the work of editorial offices and provide schools with additional material.

A special Newspaper Week has been arranged in Finland in the February of each year since 1994. Before

that, people in Finland had celebrated Newspaper Day. During Newspaper Week, schools can order a newspaper for every pupil free of charge. So far, Newspaper Weeks have generated orders for over 1.3 million copies of newspapers. Pedagogical and other material produced by newspapers and the Association contribute to lowering the threshold for teachers to adopt newspapers as part of the school day. For this reason, the material produced for teachers nearly always contains a substantial number of quite concrete task proposals aimed at making the teachers' work easier. It is possible to order blank newspapers from the newspaper publishers, i.e. empty pages with the logo of the newspaper printed on them. These empty newspaper sheets are in demand as learning material. For instance, a student can produce a thematic paper and work through the different stages that go into the making of a newspaper.

Aikakausmedia promotes the reading and educational use of magazines. Elementary schools, upper secondary schools and vocational institutions can order periodicals to be used as teaching material at a discount price. The Association trains teachers, produces materials and organises the National Magazine Day in cooperation with its publisher members, held annually in November. The Day is aimed at students of all ages and it has a varying theme. The schools that take part in the National Magazine Day are sent a selection of magazines and learning materials designed to suggest diverse ways of using magazines. As part of the National Magazine Day, Aikakausmedia presents a recognition award to a teacher who has employed media education in their work exceptionally well. Media Educator of the Year -award has been presented annually since 2005. Aikakausmedia also produces materials for teachers and students, most of which are freely available for download on the Association's website.

Mobile Media – Pedagogic Support

Teachers working in the city of Tampere can count on a unique support resource: the city's eLearning Centre employs a media pedagogue, whose tasks include visiting schools and assisting the teachers in their work. The media pedagogue provides services to both basic educa-

tion and day-care. His job description includes providing schools with media pedagogical support and consulting, acting as the authority on the cross-curricular theme of communications and media skills in working teams, coordinating and developing A/V equipment and arranging media education-related projects and training. Principals can invite the media pedagogue to schools for three days at a time during semesters. The media pedagogue gives teachers guidance both personally and with a teaching group. In addition, the pedagogue organises news bulletins and small training sessions in schools and runs a website that assists teachers in their media education work.

Mediabussi (The Media Bus) is a service run by Yleisradio, the Finnish National Broadcasting Company. The Media Bus, fitted with media equipment and carrying two instructors, travels all over Finland, visiting schools. The service brings media education and expertise to schools. The Media Bus provides a media house call

that the school can make use of in planning media education. The Bus also visits teacher training schools. The key idea behind The Media Bus is the notion that learning and understanding are achieved by doing, and doing it with modern tools. The concepts of mobile media education have also reached outside the context of school. Tampere City Library's Netti-Nysse (The Internet Bus) is a web on wheels, bringing the Internet to people's everyday life. It offers the opportunity to learn basic skills and to find out all the benefits and enjoyment that the use of information technology can provide. The purpose of The Netti-Nysse is to give encouragement and advice to people on how to become acquainted with computers and the Internet. It works as a gateway to the information society and endeavours to find novel practises and solutions to be used in the training of basic information technology skills ●

3. MEDIA EDUCATION IN YOUTH WORK

Supporting the Participation of Young People

The Youth Voice News Centre of the Helsinki City Youth Department works as a news agency, delivering material and stories to different media. The aim of this pioneer project is to encourage young people to produce media content and submit it to mainstream media. The project activates young people and enables them to have public discussions and debates in media with other people, authorities and politicians, on current issues important to them. In 2009, the Centre has produced video inserts for the Finnish Broadcasting Company's best-known current affairs programme and for a factual programme dealing with consumerism. In addition, it has provided articles for Finland's largest newspaper, Helsingin Sanomat, as well as societal polls and candidate matching tools for IRC-Galleria, (www.irg-galleria.net) the most popular online community with young people in Finland. Audio content produced by the young people has also been linked onto popular discussion forums and various social media services, where they reach an even larger audience.

The Youth Voice News Centre has many goals, one of which is changing the mainstream media's image of Finnish young people to a more positive, individual and active direction. Additionally, the project endeavours to increase positive visibility in the media for young people and the community issues that they find important. Another target is enabling youth participation in societal discourse and activating young people to converse with each other as well as authorities and decision makers.

TUNNE Project and Smart on the Web Campaign

The TUNNE Project (2005–2007), initiated by the Mannerheim League of Child Welfare, was the Finnish representative in the European Safer Internet network INSAFE. The project ended in October 2007, but the work continues in the Finnish Internet Awareness Project. The Project received funding from the Safer Internet Programme of the European Commission. Additional funding was provided by the Ministry of Transport and Communications Finland, Nokia, and the Children and New Media Project, which was funded by Finland's Slot Machine Association.

The purpose of the TUNNE Project was to empower

citizens to use the internet, as well as other information and communication technologies, safely and responsibly. The primary target groups of the project were children aged 11–16 and their parents and teachers. In the TUNNE Project, positive opportunities and smart, active use of media were emphasised and media skills were seen as a protective factor in child development. In Finland, children begin to use new communication technologies at an early age. Among teenagers, the internet has quickly become a fundamental part of their daily social life. The development has been so rapid that a great deal of parents and educators are not at all familiar with the new technologies and new forms of communication their children are using.

During the TUNNE project, a number of methods of operation inspired by Smart on the Web were formed into functional practices that are still used and useful, even after the end of the project. These practices have been implemented successfully across Finland. The key element of the Smart on the Web venture is the nation-

wide safety trainer network. The Mannerheim League of Child Welfare educates its own trainers. The trainers are either students familiar with both media education and the online world, or graduates who have an interest in the field. The trainers receive a presentation package that they can use for student bulletins, at parent-teacher meetings and in teacher training. The short videos produced by the project, which describe problem scenarios related to the internet, have proven especially successful. Requests for trainers are coordinated and trainers assigned by the local district offices. School visits by the trainers have reached tens of thousands of students, parents and professional educators. Local peer students are involved in the training events. Together with the trainer, they describe the online and gaming worlds of young people to parents and teachers. A support student is a pupil in the eighth or ninth grade who has volunteered for the post and completed the support student training ●

Organisations mentioned in the brochure

Centre for School Clubs

<http://www.kerhokeskus.fi/en>

City of Tampere – eLearning Centre

<http://koulut.tampere.fi/etaopetuskeskus/english/index.html>

Finnish Book Foundation

<http://www.kustantajat.fi/en/>

Finnish Government and Ministries

<http://valtioneuvosto.fi/ministeriot/en.jsp>

Finnish Library Association

<http://kirjastoseura.kaapeli.fi/etusivu/seura/international/english>

Finnish Newspaper Association

<http://www.sanomalehdet.fi/inenglish>

Finnish Periodical Publishers' Association

<http://www.aikakauslehdet.fi/eng>

Finland's Slot Machine Association

<http://www.ray.fi/inenglish/index.php>

Finnish Society on Media Education

<http://www.mediakasvatus.fi/seura> (choose: In English)

Koulukino – School Cinema

www.koulukino.fi

Mannerheim League of Child Welfare

http://www.mll.fi/in_english/

Media Education Centre Metka

www.mediametka.fi

Yleisradio – The Finnish Broadcasting Company

<http://www.yle.fi/fbc/index.shtml>

Youth Voice News Centre

<http://nk.hel.fi/nuortenaanitoimitus/> (in Finnish)

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