

Teachers' Perspectives on Media Educational  
Practices in Elementary School Classrooms

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis reports on a qualitative case study that explores the perceptions of seven elementary school teachers on the concept of media educational practices in the classroom. This study explores the opinions of selected elementary school teachers concerning media educational practices in the elementary classrooms. These perspectives may assist learners to explore their self-identities, develop critical thinking, express and practice creativity, represent their social position, and foster critical consciousness. The study participants included seven elementary school teachers who have adopted various modes of media educational practices in their teaching praxis utilizing technology and their conceptualizations of media education. One primary research question was addressed: What are elementary school teachers' understandings of critical media education in the classroom? Three sub-questions have been used to inform the primary research question in three categories of contexts, processes, and outcomes. Through data collected by a semi-structured interviewing method, this study describes and analyzes personal teaching experiences of elementary teachers to provide a deeper understanding of the context of media education, the instructional process for developing critical thinking and creative expression, and the criteria for measuring competencies in media education outcomes. This research highlights teachers' perspectives on the successes and challenges associated with their efforts to implement media literacy into school curricula; and on the importance of cross-curricular integration of media educational practices in elementary classrooms. The findings of this study provide insights into the importance of cross-curricular integration of media educational practices associated with critical thinking and creative expressions in elementary classrooms. These practices play a significant role for both students and teachers in becoming

change agents in a dynamic teaching and learning environment that promotes critical thinking, creativity, and positive transformation for self and community.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Research overview

The thesis is a qualitative case study that explores seven elementary school teachers' perceptions of the concept of media educational practices in the classroom. The purpose of this study is to achieve an understanding of critical media literacy, which results from media educational processes, in such a way that it can assist learners to explore their self-identities, develop critical thinking, express and practice creativity, represent their social position, and foster critical consciousness. The study participants are teachers who utilize technology and media education in their teaching praxis.

This study explores the following primary research question: What are elementary school teachers' understandings of critical media education in the classroom? This question is addressed by exploring three sub-questions related to contexts, processes, and outcomes. These three questions are: 1. What are the critical contexts of media educational practices that must be better understood? 2. What are the instructional processes in media educational practices that must be better understood? 3. What are the criteria for measuring competencies in media education outcomes?

With data collected through a semi-structured interviewing method, this study describes and analyzes personal teaching experiences of elementary teachers to provide an understanding of the context of media education, the instructional process for developing critical thinking and creative expression, and the criteria for measuring competencies in media education outcomes. This research provides teachers' perspectives on the successes and challenges of elementary school teachers' efforts to implement critical media literacy into school curricula and on the

importance of cross-curricular integration of media educational practices in elementary classrooms.

This thesis draws attention to what factors the participant teachers consider to be essential in employing media education in order to encourage students to develop critical thinking and creative expression. Practices associated with critical thinking and creative expressions in the classroom play a significant role for students' cognitive development, academic advancement, and leadership in becoming the agents of positive change in their circle of influence. Teachers also have a significant role to play as change agents that provide a dynamic teaching and learning environment where students are encouraged to engage actively in critical reflection and creative expression through dialogues, discussions, and representations of their own media production.

The thesis also shows that for successful integration of critical media education across curricula in elementary schools, classrooms must have more access to new media technology, supported by smaller class sizes to enhance students' learning. It also requires schools to have media specialist support services to oversee technical issues that might arise with media implementation, and to reduce teachers' workload and stress. Furthermore, elementary school teachers must have more teaching resources and technical and conceptual seminars in critical media education and technology.

This research also recommends the integration of critical media education in Teacher Education Programs for elementary teacher candidates at the universities. This integration is essential for elementary teacher candidates to become media literate and to develop technical and conceptual competencies. Through successful integration of critical media education in teacher education programs, graduate teacher candidates as new teachers will be able to increase their confidence and reduce their stress and time constraints to set out a practical framework for

incorporating critical media literacy in cross-curricular activities in elementary classrooms. The integration of critical media education into the teacher education program curricula can be a major contribution to the sustainable development of such integration in elementary school classrooms.

## 1.2 Background

For more than a decade, through my experiences in facilitating and teaching media educational programs for children and adolescents, working with youth from aboriginal and immigrant communities and providing after-school media programs in elementary and high schools in Saskatoon, I have learned that children can readily understand how media operate and can learn the critical concepts and production development of media. As a parent and media teacher, I have learned how parents and teachers in elementary schools can guide and shape children's understanding of their sense of self, ethics, responsibility, and community in relation to the teaching and learning of electronic media production and use. I have learned that teachers can influence positively the direction of youth development by providing an authentic educational environment where they can learn the ethical and practical aspects of media to develop their critical and creative self-expression.

It has always been clear that a practice-based approach with hands-on experiences provides an ideal educational environment for students to construct their own meaning from their life experiences that can cause deeper understanding and that can nurture a love and passion for lifelong learning. I have stressed the importance of recognizing that participation in media involves more than developing critical consumption; I have learned that media education is about both reading and writing, not just critical understanding; and I have advocated that media

education signifies the role of creative media production. Media education must involve both critical analysis (reflection) and practical, creative production (action).

Because of the impact of advanced communication and media technology on teaching and learning in schools, elementary school teachers are being encouraged by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education to adapt to the new educational environment and redesign their instructional methods to utilize new technologies in their teaching. The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (2011) and Saskatchewan Education (1988) acknowledge the importance of consistent upgrades, training, and support in media education and technology for teachers to integrate media educational practices into their teaching strategies across curriculum. Although some elementary school teachers have been adapting to the new media technology and changing their instructional methods across the curriculum, many teachers have difficulties coping with new challenges in their teaching methods (Ilomäki, 2008). The main challenge for schools and teachers is not only how to upgrade and improve instructional methods, but also how to sustain those improvements. As an instructor in a teacher education program, teaching mostly elementary teacher candidates, I have incorporated critical media literacy projects in my courses on the basis of which I have found significant positive impact on teacher candidates' learning outcomes. Beside promotion of successful critical media literacy integration across curriculum in schools, there is an urgent need for integrating critical media literacy in teacher education programs in universities. Subsequently, the successful integration and sustainability of critical media literacy in schools begins at the teacher education program. It depends on active engagement of universities in providing sufficient media literacy training for teacher candidates and its continuous supports and collaboration with schools that strengthen teachers' capacity to utilize new technologies for their instructions and sustain critical media literacy integration in

elementary schools. Given these educational objectives, it is important to gain an understanding of how teachers experience and practice media literacy in their classrooms.

### 1.3 Purpose

This study explores the integration of media educational practices in elementary classrooms. It seeks to understand the perceptions of teachers regarding the role of media education in assisting learners explore their self-identities, develop critical thinking, express and practice creativity, represent their social position, and foster critical consciousness.

### 1.4 Problem Statement

Although many children today are technologically savvy, having interest and easy access to media and communication technology and creating media messages, most are not necessarily media literate. They do not critically reflect, understand, and analyze media messages presented to them. Without critical reflection and creative engagement in the classroom, our current generation of students will grow up to become incompetent citizens not going to learn to improve their knowledge through life experiences. There is an increasing need to encourage children to reflect critically and express creatively their thoughts in the classroom in ways that redirect their learning path to be competent when social media and other new technologies have become so central to daily life.

This study is designed, in part, as a response to the implementation of Tele-Media, a Saskatoon Public School curriculum unit providing media educational practice in grade seven classrooms. Although media education is an essential part of the Language Arts and Social Studies curriculum in Saskatchewan's schools, it still remains marginal in the learning experiences of young students. While the Saskatoon Public School Division is offering several professional developments in communication and technology training, relatively little formal

media literacy training is available to teachers and the majority of elementary teachers are still lacking sufficient technical skills and conceptual understanding of critical media literacy to develop new media instructional strategies to incorporate into their classrooms' cross-curricular activities. Most teachers do not have sufficient technical and conceptual knowledge and a practical framework to incorporate media education across curriculum. When one considers the expanding role of media and communication technology in education and its potential further applications, and children's interest in accessing a variety of media, there is an emergent need to set out a practical framework for reducing barriers to the integration of successful media literacy in elementary school curricula.

### 1.5 Objectives

The aim of this research is to explore perceptions of teachers regarding how to integrate critical media education in elementary school curricula and to identify obstacles that prevent successful integration processes. The research presented in this dissertation will provide an opportunity to observe and understand how teachers' strategies, perceptions, experiences, challenges, and aspirations reflect different stages of media educational processes.

### 1.6 Research Questions

This research is guided by the following primary research question: What are elementary school teachers' perceptions of critical media education in the classroom? This primary research question seeks to determine the significance of integrating critical media education in elementary school curricula and to identify obstacles that prevent successful integration process. This question has been shaped by an understanding of critical reflection and creative engagement in the classroom, which has been shown to have a direct correlation to the use of media educational practice.

## Sub-questions

The following sub-questions have been used to inform the primary research question in three categories of contexts, processes, and outcomes. They highlight the in-depth understanding of critical media pedagogy as a theory of learning in media education and inquire how the theory provides a dynamic framework for the approaches available for teaching in elementary classroom.

1- Contexts: What are the critical contexts of media educational practices that must be better understood? Basic questions include: What is media education? What is critical agency in the classroom? Where do media educational practices happen? Who are engaging in these practices? What kinds of supports are being provided? And how are these practices sustained?

2- Processes: What are the instructional processes in media educational practices that must be better understood? Basic questions include: What is being taught about mass media in elementary schools? What is being taught about critical thinking and creative expression? How is it being taught? What are the obstacles and advantages of different methods of instruction? What are the possibilities and limitations in media literacy integration in elementary schools' curricula?

3- Outcomes: What are the criteria for measuring competencies in media education outcomes? Basic questions include: What skills, attitudes or behaviors of children should be measured? What skills and knowledge do children already possess? How media educational practices can be most effective for developing critical and creative agents of change in elementary classrooms?

## 1.7 Theoretical Framework

This dissertation is informed by the insights from critical social theory, which provides a multidisciplinary knowledge base with the implicit goal of advancing the emancipatory function



of knowledge. Applying critical social theory provides an analytical foundation for understanding critical media educational practices, and helps identify the successes and challenges of elementary school teacher efforts to implement media literacy into school curricula. Critical media pedagogy as an application of critical theory is an educational process and an innovative platform to assist students to acquire media literacy and to develop critical thinking, creative expressions and a sense of fulfillment. Critical media pedagogy is a theory of learning in media education that provides comprehensive conceptual understandings of critical media educational processes.

### 1.8 Methodology

This research is constituted through review of contemporary literature on critical media literacy education and through exploration of the perspectives of elementary school teachers who critically reflect upon their media educational practices. In this research, the qualitative case study method provides creative and expressive strategies for describing and critically analyzing personal and cultural experiences that include data collection through individual semi-structured interviews with selected teachers in elementary schools. The qualitative case study, as Merriam (1988) describes, “is an ideal design for understanding and interpreting observations of educational phenomenon” (p. 2). According to Merriam “the research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education” (p. 3). This study is directed to an understanding of the significant role of creative expression of digital media production to assist learners in exploring their self-identities, developing critical thinking, practicing creativity, and representing their social position.

## 1.9 Data Analysis

Through data collected by interviews with seven elementary school teachers, I described and analyzed teachers' perceptions regarding the role of media educational practices in developing critical thinking and creative expressions in classrooms. These data have been read in a detailed manner to work out a comprehensive understanding of the material. The thematic analysis has been used to provide a context for the findings of the interviews in five themes. These five themes include the contexts of media education, agency of change, engagements and supports in media education, the instructional processes in media education, and measuring competencies in media education outcomes. The primary intent of the research is to provide a clear description of teachers' experiences and their perspectives on the social impact of media educational practices in elementary schools.

## 1.10 Limitations and Delimitations

This research does not provide detailed recommendations for media educational activities or teaching materials that can be used in classrooms. The study was intended to explore a coherent conceptual and practical framework based on the concept of media education in elementary schools and its significant social impact. This research provides an opportunity to better understand the dynamics of creativity in critical media literacy and its applications in school curricula, and to observe and understand how media teachers' strategies, perceptions, experiences, challenges, and aspirations reflect upon the enhancement of media educational practice.

This study was limited to interviews with seven participants from four elementary schools in one school division; therefore the conclusions can not be generalized because of both the small sample size and the limitation of the study to a single urban location. This research

also may carry potential bias emerging in participants' views and influence arising from the researcher's interpretations and assumptions. However, the findings and conclusions of this research can potentially provide positive insights on media educational practices that can be useful for setting out a practical and conceptual media educational framework in various school divisions in Saskatchewan.

#### 1.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval and permission have been granted following applications to both the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) and the Saskatoon Public School Board due to the involvement of human participants. All the volunteer participants in this study have been requested to sign a consent form before participating in the study. There were no constraints or obligations associated with their participation as they could leave the research study and have signed a release form before data or statements provided by them have been used.

#### 1.12 Dissertation Organization

Chapter one has provided an overview and introduction to the research study, background, purpose and goals, problem statement, objectives, research questions, theoretical framework, methodology, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, limitations and delimitations, and dissertation organization. Chapter two summarizes related literature in critical media educational practices including review of art as the vehicle and agent for creative expression, imagination and medium of expression, creativity in education, language and symbolism, the emerging new media and communication technologies, the emergent need for media literacy in elementary classrooms, media education in Canadian schools, and critical media literacy. Chapter three reviews the research methodology used for the collection of data

and analysis. Chapter four presents the findings and analysis of information collected from interviews with study participants; and chapter five includes discussion, conclusions and recommendations.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter reviews literature mainly organized around the three research sub-questions on context, process, and outcome in critical media educational practices. These reviews frame connections for analyzing elements, aspects, and patterns in the literature, discussing the overall findings, and drawing conclusions. The related literature includes topics that explore the relationships and connectedness of art, beauty, aesthetic experience, the importance of art as an agent for purposeful creative expression, perspectives on critical media literacy, and media educational processes and outcomes. The topics in this chapter include:

- Art as the vehicle and agent for creative expression; creativity in education,
- The emerging new media and communication technologies,
- The emergent need for media literacy in elementary classrooms,
- Media education in Canadian schools,
- Media literacy, media education, and media literacy education, and
- Prospects of critical media literacy in elementary classrooms.

#### 2.1 Art: The Vehicle and Agent for Creative Expression

Besides all human needs that derive from existential survival, there is a particular striving for recognition, pursuit, and delight in "beauty". Most people seem to have ideas of what beauty is, but we need to understand the process through which beauty becomes actualized and its role in relation to our experience of learning, aesthetic appreciation, creative expression, and connectedness with the natural environment.

Many people experience the richness and mysteries of life that inspire them through the sensuous beauty of the natural landscape. The delightful experiences with nature in the early

years of every human gradually led into developing an appreciation of composition as interrelationship of forms and colours. Children can feel the connectedness with nature through their senses and understand the interrelationships among forms and colours with varieties of compositions at different levels of reality.

In our life, we experience particular moments during which we feel a sense of enormous joy and appreciation by focusing on one or a set of objects or concepts where we have been drawn into a unique state of being with no sense of time and space. This is an ecstatic state of being that sometimes called *aesthetic experience*. Aesthetic can be defined as awareness of the beauty beyond sense and reason. Markovic (2012) defines aesthetic experience “as a special state of mind that is qualitatively different from the everyday experience” (p. 1). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) called this a *flow experience*. According to Markovic (2012), flow experience is “an effortless mental energy flow caused by the awareness of congruence between incoming information and our goals. During this state of mind people are intensively immersed in what they are doing, with strong involvement in the process of the activity” (p. 2). Maslow (1968) called this state a *peak experience*. In peak experiences, Markovic (2012) states, “attention is fully engaged and focused on a particular object, while the object is seen as detached from its everyday purpose and usefulness” (p.2). In aesthetic experience in comparison with the flow experience, Markovic adds, “the person is self-transcending, self-forgetful, and disoriented in time and space” (p. 2).

Meke (2008) describes the relation of aesthetic experience to the forms of comprehension and representation. He states, “The specifically aesthetic experience is reflective in being an experience of the general form of comprehension or representation. This, however, is nothing else than the self-experience or –reflection of the general form of

comprehension or representation” (Menke, 2008, p. 64). Menke adds,

Aesthetic experience as (self-) reflection is, rather, of a practical kind: by changing and transforming the ordinary process of comprehension and representation, it allows the forces that are concealed in this process to become apparent. Aesthetic experience as (self-) reflection takes place as aesthetic activity: by means of another mode of enactment of processes of comprehension and representation. (Menke, 2008, p. 65)

For Menke, aesthetic reflection, as part of aesthetic experience, is a self-reflective enactment. Aesthetic reflection becomes the object of self-expression and creativity.

A major part of aesthetic experience and enjoyment comes from our connectedness with nature. When we think of how we express our thought about nature such as a flower, rainbow, sunset, and desert, we regard these natural phenomena or environments as aesthetically pleasing aspects of our world; but, how does aesthetic appreciation of nature relate to aesthetic appreciation of the works of art created by human beings? Reflection on our aesthetic experience with nature gives rise to some questions I think are fundamental to understanding art; questions such as: “why do we appreciate something aesthetically?”, “what is the connection between aesthetic and understanding?”, and “is aesthetic appreciation subjective or can it be measured in terms of reason and logic?”

While form, colour, and composition are important aspects of an object or scene, the individual’s feelings have significant impact on the treatment of all three for creating particular mood, essence, expression, and interpretation in the art making process. The desire to make something special is characteristic of the art making process when an artist produces a work of art through the medium of her or his choice. Both making and viewing works of art have profound impact on forming new ways of viewing the world and creating inspiration, hope, delight, and the sense of beauty. We, as human beings, have aesthetic experience with nature and appreciate the beauty. We act as observers and also feel as

observed. We are woven together to reflect the notion of resonance and interconnectedness with nature (Piedmont, 1999). This feeling of interconnectedness locates humanity as part of nature, looking inwardly, to explore, pose questions, learn, imagine, realize possibilities, and co-create infinite realities.

While children in elementary schools are engaged in creative art and media production, they can be directed and challenged by their teachers with questions such as, “what is art?”, “how do we know if something is art?”, “who decides what is art?”, “what is beauty?”, “just why is there beauty in the world at all?” and many other questions . Subsequently, through learning about art, media, and creative expression, and group discussions, children may justify their rationality in terms of reason and logic by redirecting these questions from “is it a work of art?” to “how do I feel about it?” and “how do I feel if it is good in it’s kind?” This rationality might facilitate a space to explore, contemplate, and create new and unique criteria of their own for evaluating works of art. Through art-making experience and observations, we can learn that art inspires passion and admiration in artists and viewers considering that each individual expresses self with one’s own terms depending on her or his learnings from life experiences. If art creates beauty in form as an essential element, since all living entities’ existence depend on form; one can claim that all artworks celebrate the joy of existence. According to Whitehead (1929a), experience is the “self-enjoyment of being one among many, and of being one arising out of the composition of many” (p. 220). Every individual unit of process enjoys its own existence and a state of being. For Whitehead, “the experience enjoyed by an actual entity” is “what the actual entity is in itself, for itself” (p. 81). To be actual is to be an occasion of experience and hence an occasion of enjoyment.

Making artwork in many forms can be the expression of a purpose that creates a



dynamic stream of energy in human life. An artist opens and offers the self in a purposeful pathway, exploring and engaging in a dialogue with other entities in a meaningful way, and noticing the sensuous materials directed towards a particular theme. Since any theme may be a subject, one desires to understand that subject. A subject from the natural environment can stimulate a range of ideas. These ideas may be reflected in forms of words, images, or paint on paper to share feelings, passion, and beauty with others. We may consider beauty as the expression of a purpose through a sensuous medium that necessitates the creation of a physical object as a work of art. But how does a physical object become an object for enjoyment, satisfaction, and appreciation? Can we say that art made with any medium is instinctive? We may consider that developing art is becoming which resolves in imagination. The process of creation yields an aesthetic object for satisfaction. The aesthetic experience includes aspects of fulfillment when both the object and the feeling become identified in the creative process; the artist's emotional resonance becomes prominent for the promotion of positive change, which becomes decisive in creating a work of art.

How does the creative space of the arts, through one's understanding of aesthetic value, become a productive ground for engaging the senses to generate noble ideas that can be synthesized into knowledge? Acts of creation require a medium to hold the expression. Dewey suggests, "Everything depends upon the way in which material is used when it operates as medium" (Dewey, 1938, p. 62). For Dewey, each work of art has its own medium and that medium is especially directed to convey a message in a particular way of communication. Poetry, art, science, philosophy, music, dance, and theater use media that are conducive to each unique expression. "Each medium says something that cannot be uttered as well or as

completely in any other tongue” (Dewey, 1938, p. 105). Dewey’s notion of the arts as an agent of communication suggests that medium has a relational effect on the choice of artistic discipline. People might not be self-described as an artist or even recognized as creative individuals. However, there are unique ways they engage in events and activities, and think about themselves and the world around them. Unleashing those qualities of uniqueness and allowing the self to engage actively in a creative process allows for a sense of self-recognition and alignment with the true state of being.

Everyone potentially has the essence of being an artist and can reflect upon the notion of creativity in their life. Art in any form is the vehicle and agent for human expression. The expressiveness of an artist is purposeful through applied objects, subjects, rhythms, harmonies, and metaphors that may yield to a particular style. Style represents the characteristics of any work of art through a preferred creative medium that expresses a purpose. Medium refers to materials and forms of communication. Some characteristic elements describe the creative process of expression in a medium such as sound, rhythm, and silence in music; numbers, symbols and shapes in mathematics; paint, clay, and canvas in fine arts; story, dialogue, and moving images in media. If one medium is replaced with another, then a new purpose provides new possibilities for creativity. Creativity requires understanding of the medium and its storytelling tools, and integrating imagination and identifying the target audience and sharing in the public sphere.

The expression of feeling through the medium represents the work of art. Feeling is sensuous and can be expressed in the integral perception of the object. Perception is the understanding of an object shaped by its internal relationships imaginative in the whole process of becoming. The interrelationship of feeling, imagination, and perception provides a

space for integrating past and future in present experience for creation and appreciation of the work of art. Both, creation and appreciation are occasions that become realized as instances of satisfaction and imagination. The passage from creation to appreciation becomes actual communicable artwork through continuity between physical object and imaginative experience. Upon the realization of satisfaction in the passage from creation to appreciation, an identity forms that exhibits the social character of media art and elevates the expressiveness of human imagination and creativity to a joyful moment and a sense of fulfillment.

The arts as representation of expression reflect our understanding of self and the world. Human capacity for imagination locates us in a virtual vortex of abundance holding infinite available possibilities for creativity. Being in the flow of that virtual vortex, being aware of choices, and making conscious decisions, elevates us to be connected with nature at the present and to create our own alternative realities. Greene (1995a) underscores having a space for imagination that embraces and fosters imaginative awareness for alternative possibilities: “it ought to be a space infused by the kind of imaginative awareness that enables those involved to imagine alternative possibilities for their own becoming and their groups’ becoming” (p. 39).

For Greene, imagination initiates our action to create art. Greene (1995b) states,

... by becoming aware of ourselves as questioners, as makers of meaning, as persons engaged in constructing and reconstructing realities with those around us, we may be able to communicate to students the notion that reality depends on perspective, that its construction is never complete, and that there is always something more. (p. 381)

Greene (1988) stresses the importance of the arts and creative expression in reflecting our imagination and creativity enabling us to reach toward our vision of possibilities. She promotes a learning that engages both teachers and students to be proactive, take actions for positive change, and to share their own representations in public events. In a real sense, we create our own selves every moment, here, and now. Creativity is motivated by curiosity, by an urge to

generate, and by a desire to reflect on actions. Creativity requires a choice of the medium to hold our image in an expressive form. It is a disposition of play, process of romance, discovery, adventure, noticing the uniqueness of the artistic expressions, and inventiveness acknowledged by an audience in a space of public event (Lahiji, 2008).

## 2.2 Creativity in Education

Education as learning, allows students to transform their worldviews through making, creating, and weaving (Greene, 1995b). Green believes that “the learner must break with the taken-for-granted, and look through the lenses of various ways of knowing, seeing, and feeling in a conscious endeavor to impose different orders upon experience” (Greene, 2001, p. 5). Freire (1998) regards transformative learning as a mindset infused with morality, responsibility, critical thinking, and consciousness. For Freire, education is about critical comprehension and creation of new knowledge for cultivating curiosity that encourages exploration, discovery, creation, re-creation and self-transformation.

Whitehead (1929b) states, "Education is the acquisition of the art of the utilization of knowledge" (p. 4). For Whitehead, education is constituted by inquiry-based learning in a three-stage or cycle of learning comprising romance, precision, and generalization. “The stage of romance is the stage of first apprehension” (p. 17) in the educational experience and provides a primary acquisition of knowledge. In the stage of romance, learners make choices and experience freshness, enthusiasm, and enjoyment of learning. The stage of precision is about the "exactness of formulation" (p. 18). It is related to the coherency, consistency and harmony of the data. Precision is discipline in the languages and grammars of specialized subject matters such as art, science, and technical subjects including communication and technology. Generalization is the final stage, incorporating romance and precision into a wise mode of becoming in general

context and wholeness of logical ideas and classifications. It is related to the collective composition towards satisfaction, the moment of educational completeness and “fruition which has been the goal of the precise training” (p. 19). These stages motivate people for fresh experiences of excitement, romance, imagination, and creativity in the educational process.

According to Bai (2001), “translation of knowledge into action is what education is for and what pedagogy is about”. She calls for action with her “pedagogical recommendation” in helping students to “become aware of the mind tendency toward disembodiment” and providing “them with opportunities and tools to work at embodiment by recovering percepts and restoring them to the centre stage of consciousness” (pp. 87-88). She calls her recommended pedagogy a “pedagogy of mindfulness” and argues “this pedagogy is fit to address not only the pedagogical problem of translating knowledge into action, but also the more substantive task of healing human alienation from the world” (p. 88). Bai explains our connection with the physical world through our bodily senses: “The body and its senses have co-evolved with the material, physical world. What our senses “tell” us constitutes our primary understanding of the world” (p. 89).

Using our bodily senses with meaningful, directed and purposeful viewing of the environment leads to emotional connectedness that opens possibilities to understand and perceive the world. Feeling will arise because of responding to perception and understanding of knowledge. This understanding forms relatedness and connectedness that stimulates care, involvement and responsibility. Care, or a feeling of connectedness and responsibility, is essential to evaluating what is important and is therefore related to critical thinking. Humans discriminate and select by assigning importance. According to Whitehead, importance is “interest, involving that intensity of individual feeling which leads to publicity of expression” (Whitehead, 1938, p. 8). Whitehead emphasizes that, “The terms morality, logic, religion, art,

have each of them been claimed as exhausting the whole meaning of importance”, but "morality consists in the control of process so as to maximize importance” (Whitehead, 1938, p. 11, 13). We can regard it as an exercise through testing out the usefulness of several potential means of action and expression morally and logically aligned with our true feeling of excitement. With critical thinking and creative engagement, we make selections that filter out negative alternatives and identify what is “important”.

Scarfe (2005) states that selectivity involves the fluctuating interplay of positive and negative prehensions. Prehension is the act of grasping or seizing. It is apprehension by the senses. Positive prehension is a response for integration and unification whereas negative prehension is a reaction for segregation and separation. Scarfe notes that “Whitehead’s term prehension refers to the apprehension of data at the root of experience, an activity which may or may not be cognitive...it also means feeling, grasping, taking-account of, or seizing, operations which are not necessarily cognitive in nature” (Scarfe, 2005, p. 67). While prehensions of the positive sort involve the positive appropriation of data, negative prehensions are the dismissal of irrelevant data (Scarfe, 2005). The initial data positively apprehended are “simple physical feelings” (Whitehead, 1929a, p. 355). Feeling is the basis for prehensions and becoming for actual entities. Through positive prehensions the imagination develops an impulse for engagement that leads to creativity as a selected action. For Whitehead (1929a), creativity is “that ultimate notion of the highest generality at the base of actuality” (p. 47).

Based on Whitehead’s notion of novelty, all actual entities are novel beings and self-creative. They are new forms continuously being created, making contribution for creating other new forms and perishing in the universe. According to Whitehead:

Creativity is the principle of novelty. Creativity introduces novelty into the content of the many, which are the universe disjunctively. The creative advance is the application of

this ultimate principle of creativity to each novel situation which it originates. The ultimate metaphysical principle is the advance from disjunction to conjunction, creating a novel entity other than the entities given in disjunction. The novel entity is at once the togetherness of the many which it finds and also it is one among the disjunctive many which it leaves; it is a novel entity, disjunctively among the many entities which it synthesizes. The many become one, and are increased by one. In their natures, entities are disjunctively many in process of passage into conjunctive unity. Thus the production of novel togetherness is the ultimate notion embodied in the term concrescence. These ultimate notions of production of novelty and concrete togetherness are inexplicable either in terms of higher universals or in terms of the components participating in the concrescence. The analysis of the components abstracts from the concrescence. The sole appeal is to intuition. (1929a, p. 32)

Whitehead's notion of creativity may be interpreted as self-creation and self-determination that each occasion of experience is an interdependent creative act, determining its own becoming towards a particular self-enjoyment and contributing to others' enjoyment. "Concrescence" is the name for the process in which the universe of many things acquires an individual unity in a determinate relegation of each item of the 'many' to its subordination in the constitution of the novel 'one' (Whitehead, 1929a, p. 321). For Whitehead "concrescence" is the moment of creativity enjoyed by actual entities. Actual entities are also termed actual occasions, the real living bursts of energy of which the universe is made up, "are drops of experience, complex and interdependent" (Whitehead, 1929a, p. 28). Concrescence is referred to as growing together, a unity of feeling, connecting actual entity with the present experience. In feeling, subjective aim, "in its successive modifications, remains the unifying factor governing the successive phases of interplay between physical and conceptual feelings" (Whitehead, 1929a, p. 343). This process follows by fulfilling the aim: "satisfaction". Through these inter-related events, a new actual entity, a new form; novelty steps into becoming.

We continuously learn and change our worldviews based on our life experiences in creating with what we have available to us at the present moment. Hence, we create our realities from moment to moment, exploring to expand the boundaries of our knowledge about the

meaning of life and our existence. The future does not exist yet but in every shifting moment, when we engage in an event, endless different possibilities may occur. We never know what will happen but we know what is happening at the present moment. With what we have available to us at the moment, we anticipate and set strategies for all of the possibilities as best as we can to move forward, creating a moment of joy and a sense of fulfillment. In the creative process, it all comes down to anticipating and observing one event after another and witnessing what is happening at the moment. Being at the moment is exercising the notion of abundance at the present moment, accepting what is available to us, and contributing something new to it with understanding that a wonderful unique reality is being created here and now. In its essence life is a creative act, which truly defines human nature for striving to learn, to contribute, to creatively express new forms, and to celebrate novelty.

By experiencing a creative art-making process using a variety of media in elementary classrooms, students creatively explore and express their emotional responses in the present moment through artistic endeavor in order to validate their unique conscious state of being, their connectedness to life, their sense of self and identity, their social position, and their well-being. By employing media educational practices in elementary classrooms, teachers can play a significant role in encouraging students to develop critical thinking and engage actively in creative expression through dialogues, discussions, and representations of their own media production.

### 2.3 The Emerging New Media and Communication Technologies

For over two decades the impact of emerging technologies and media education on children and young people, and on teaching and learning, have become important issues constantly changing the landscape of education. The impact of the media and emerging



technologies through integration into our lives is reflected with increasing seamlessness across generations with an urge for new ways of communication shifting boundaries of social and cultural quality of living. Media messages in many forms such as magazines, newspapers, billboards, films, radio, photography, television, and Internet are omnipresent and a vital part of people's everyday life.

The emergence of the Internet and communication technologies has transformed our lives and our society. The Internet and other forms of online communication technologies provide virtual spaces in which people from all around the world can creatively express and share ideas, participate in critical discussions and debates, and become contributors with the spirit of collaboration and knowledge exchange. The new media and communication technologies open up new avenues for imagination, creativity, and envisioning endless possibilities for regeneration and positive transformation in communities. According to Dahlgren (1995), communication in modern societies can be broadly divided into two main notions:

- 1- A participatory and alternative media including computer-mediated communication and technology; and
- 2- Social movements using these media actively for social change.

The notion of participatory media and computer-mediated communication and technology is closely related to the concept of the public sphere crafted by Habermas (1989). The public sphere is a democratic environment for all citizens to gather and share their views and discuss their political concerns to form a progressive public opinion. Habermas (1989) highlights the important role of media in the public sphere for publicity though he is critical of media that consider people as passive consumers rather than contributing citizens.

In the information age, some approaches have been influenced by critical theory as advanced by Marcuse, Adorno, Horkheimer, and Habermas. These theorists have provided an alternative to the instrumental framework for certain phenomena of Internet and society such as eLearning, eHealth, digital art, Web art, online journalism, or cyber-science that are progressive and transitional tools to new sets of thinking and living in society.

In the information age, the idea of public sphere has extended to the phenomena of Internet and manifestation of virtual environments for social and educational network such as eLearning, eHealth, digital art, Web art, online journalism, or cyber-science. These virtual environments are progressive and transitional tools that provide new sets of thinking and living in society. Internet access provides these social and educational environments to search for information, plan trips, read news, articles, communicate with others through e-mail, instant messaging, Internet phone, chat, group discussion, and video conferencing. We can listen to online radio, watch YouTube videos, purchase materials online, express and share our ideas through blogs, share images and videos; we can meet people online from distance, protest against oppression, learn, play games, and create knowledge in collaboration with other people.

Our younger generations are growing up in a context in which Internet and media technology have become readily available, accessible and popular, bringing with them an array of naturally occurring symbolic expressions, creative forms of socialization and approaches to new ways of learning. School children are not only consumers of media while browsing and sharing ideas through social network, but they also are content creators in ways such as producing videos, graphics, animations, slowmations, and websites.

Human social networks, through using online communication with interactive capabilities, potentially promote possibilities for new ways of teaching and learning that enable

many people in all ages from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, to find common interests and connections and to form virtual social media communities. These forms of virtual social communities enable people to switch from one medium to another and create multi-media environments that promote effective, vibrant, and exciting learning processes.

#### 2.4 The Emergent Need for Media Literacy in Elementary Classrooms

Many children use the Internet for learning and communication; they listen to music and watch video online while sending text messages, they play online video games with their friends at a distance. Children currently entering elementary schools already are enthusiastic for using digital media “to express themselves, explore their identities, and connect with peers” (Rheingold, 2008). They are quickly becoming familiar with the recreational and constructive learning aspects of the new media and communication technologies far more than those entering into elementary school just a decade ago. These activities provide a breadth of opportunities for teachers to seize on the interests and enthusiasm already implanted in the incoming students through integrating technology-mediated educational resources; and engage in transformative media educational practices that will encourage children to critically reflect on and creatively engage in meaningful and expressive media productions.

Children’s creative engagement in producing media, drawing from their own lived experiences, can improve the classroom’s flexibility in the face of ongoing changes in communication technologies responding to the varied learning needs in elementary schools. However, it also comes with crucial concerns which teachers must be properly instructed and updated, particularly relating to how young students use media and communication technology to create meanings. Teachers must learn how to keep up with the fast growing new media and

communication; and be prepared to utilize the right tools and knowledge to actively engage their technologically savvy students in critical thinking and creative expression.

There is a great need to set out a media educational framework for children in early ages based on parallel values on critical reflection and creative engagement. Share (2009) argues that critical media literacy must be taught early. Share emphasizes the concept of critical media literacy that highlights the successes and challenges of elementary school teachers in implementing media literacy into school curricula. With the increasing expansion and evolution of new media and communication technology and children's interest and access to a variety of multi-media environments, teaching critical media literacy in the elementary schools becomes more of a priority. Gainer (2010, 368) stresses that, "Schools are places where students can learn to transform society. In a classroom that embraces pedagogy of critical media literacy, space is made for student to analyze and critique dominant narratives". Teaching critical media literacy in the elementary schools challenges assumptions about young children and offers an authentic educational environment for critical reflection and creative engagement in the classrooms.

## **2.5 Media literacy, media education, and media literacy education**

Media education, as defined by Buckingham (2003), "is the process of teaching and learning about media; media literacy is the outcome – the knowledge and skills learners require" (p. 4). For Buckingham media literacy results from media educational processes, which enable learners to critically interpret media messages and creatively produce their own media representations. Buckingham (2003) states,

Media education (therefore) aims to develop both critical understanding and active participation. It enables young people to interpret and make informed judgments as consumers of media; but it also enables them to become producers of media in their own

right. Media education is about developing young people's critical and creative abilities.  
(p. 4)

Media literacy as the outcome of media education "is the ability to encode and decode the symbols transmitted via media and the ability to synthesize, analyze and produce mediated messages" [National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), 2014].

In the everyday use of languages, signs, and images as symbols, we constantly send, receive and make various kinds of texts and meanings in various situational contexts for conveying and interpreting meaning from one medium to another. "A word is a symbol," Whitehead (1927, p. 10) emphasizes. We perceive words as symbols as ways of conveying messages with meanings created through imagery, texts, subtexts, sound, ideas, and emotions. In our modern mass media saturated culture, commercial corporations heavily use symbols that contain texts (the actual words, images, audio, and video) and subtexts (the underlying and hidden meanings of the persuasive messages) to convince the target audience to purchase or to consume particular brands. In media studies, a code is a shared concept for connecting symbols with their meanings. The term is used in a variety of ways in which a message is being "encoded" from the sender and "decoded" by the receiver. From a cultural and political standpoint, mass media encode a particular ideology for increasing the conformity of the citizens, promoting ideological hegemony, political domination, and socio-economic status. Generally, "mass media" refers to various means of communication technology determined to communicate with large audiences. Television, websites, radio, cellular phones, billboards, and newspapers are different accessible public media capable of conveying messages to large audiences. The term can also be a collective noun for the press or news reporting agencies.

NAMLE (2014) defines media literacy education as “the educational field dedicated to teaching the skills associated with media literacy”. NAMLE (2007) has stressed that the purpose of media literacy education is to help learners to “develop the habit of inquiry and skills of expression” necessary for critical thinking, effective communication, and active citizenship (p.1). The American Association of School Librarians' Standards for the 21st-Century Learner define inquiry “as a stance toward learning in which the learner is engaged in asking questions and finding answers, not simply accumulating facts presented by someone else that have no relation to previous learning or new understanding” (Small, Arnone, Stripling, & Berger, 2012; as cited in Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 2012, p. 3). The goal of inquiry-based teaching is that all students develop an “inquiry stance” with more emphasis on asking good questions than finding the answers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, as cited in Stripling, 2008, p. 52). For Stripling (2008) “the payoff in terms of in-depth learning is profound” (p. 52). Audet and Jordan add that, “Students can and do learn about subjects in teacher-centered classrooms, but they learn best in a learner centered environment that emphasizes inquiry” (Audet and Jordan 2005, xiii).

The National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy (NLCML) adds the components of “access” and “evaluate” to the definition of media literacy. According to NLCML, Media literacy is the ability to “access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate messages in a variety of forms” (Aufderheide, 1993, p. xx). A media literate person, therefore, “can decode, evaluate, analyze, and produce both print and electronic media” (Aufderheide, 1997, p. 79). Based on the definition of media literacy and what it means to be media literate, criteria for media pedagogical process competencies and assessments vary. In addition, because of the complexity of media culture, rapid growth of technology, and changing world, there are no standard measuring indicators for assessing media literacy as an outcome of media pedagogical process. In a real

sense, each student has a unique way and pace for learning conceptual and technical aspects of critical media education and creating their own media representation. The more young people learn about media through experiencing, interpreting/analyzing and making the media production, the more media literate they become (Worsnop, 1994). However, for successful media educational practices in elementary school classrooms, it is important to establish a set of criteria for students' self and peer assessment. According to Boud (1995), assessments comprise two main components: "making decisions about the standards of performance expected and then making judgments about the quality of the performance in relation to these standards. For self-assessment, students need to be involved in both of these components" (as cited in Spiller, 2012, p. 3; emphasis in source). Self-assessment is defined by Arndrade & Du (2007) as

a process of formative assessment during which students reflect on and evaluate the quality of their work and their learning, judge the degree to which they reflect explicitly stated goals or criteria, identify strengths and weaknesses in their work, and revise accordingly. (p. 160, as cited in Spiller, 2012, p. 3)

According to Spiller (2012), "making judgments about the progress of one's own learning is integral to the learning process" (p. 4). On the importance of self-assessment, Spiller (2012) writes about self-evaluation that "builds on a natural tendency to check out the progress of one's own learning" (p. 5) and "with its emphasis on student responsibility and making judgments" (p. 6), it is "a necessary skill for lifelong learning" (Boud, 1995, p.11, as cited in Spiller, 2012, p. 6). In media educational processes, students can be encouraged to use a rubric as an evaluation tool for self-assessment with a set of criteria based on the definition of media literacy, which provides a clear set of expectations and valuable ongoing feedback revealing their areas of strength and areas that need more improvement.

According to MediaSmarts (2014), media literacy work can be evaluated in three ways:

- Based on how well the student understands the key concepts of media literacy and the concepts and ideas being explored in the lesson or assignment.
- Based on the depth and quality of the student's inquiry and analysis of the questions raised in the lesson or assignment, and the student's thoughtfulness in identifying issues and questions to examine.
- Based on how well the student applies technical skills associated with either the medium being studied (movies, TV, video games, etc.), the medium used in the evaluation tool, or both.

Incorporating the concepts of media literacy into media educational practices has been approached by educators in various ways. Kellner & Shares (2007) identified three main approaches to teaching media education. These three approaches are media arts education, media literacy movement, and critical media literacy.

The Media arts education approach emphasizes valuing and appreciating the aesthetic qualities of media and the arts; in this orientation, “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” (Kellner & Shares, 2007, p. 61). In this approach, most students focus on production and performance and mainly develop technical skills while lacking the processes associated with critical thinking, identity formation, and creativity. The Media literacy movement approach “attempts to expand the notion of literacy to include popular culture and multiple forms of media (music, video, Internet, advertising, etc.) while still working within a print literacy tradition” (Kellner & Shares, 2007, p. 61). This approach considers media literacy as series of communication competencies, including the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate. The Critical media literacy approach highlights



... ideology critique and analyzing the politics of representation of crucial dimensions of gender, race, class, and sexuality; incorporating alternative media production; and expanding textual analysis to include issues of social context, control, resistance, and pleasure. A critical media literacy approach also expands literacy to include information literacy, technical literacy, multimodal literacy, and other attempts to broaden print literacy concepts to include different tools and modes of communicating. (Kellner & Shares, 2007, p. 61)

This approach emphasizes the need to analyze media culture as products of social production and struggle. It encourages students to be critical of media representations and discourses. This approach also stresses the importance of teaching media literacy as a participatory and collaborative project by learning to use media tools for self-expression and social activism (Kellner and Kahn, 2003).

The Center for Media Literacy (CML) is an American media educational organization that promotes and supports “media literacy education as a framework for accessing, analyzing, evaluating, creating and participating with media content” (2011, p.1, lines 3-4). Besides developing media literacy skills, the Center for Media Literacy focuses on developing citizenship and democracy.

Media Literacy is a 21st century approach to education. It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages in a variety of forms--from print to video to the Internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy. (Thoman and Jolls, 2005a, p. 190)

CML has developed MediaLit Kit, an inquiry-based framework for media literacy that features five core concepts and five key questions of media literacy.

Five Core Concepts:

1. All media messages are ‘constructed.’
2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
3. Different people experience the same media message differently.
4. Media have embedded values and points of view.
5. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

Five key questions of media literacy:

1. Who created this message?
2. What techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently from me?.
4. What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why was this message sent?

(Thoman, E. & Jolls, T., 2005b, p. 18)

In his presentation at the University of Manitoba, Michael Wesch (2008) stressed the importance of questioning through the inquiry process of learning.

Good questions are the driving force of critical and creative thinking and therefore one of the best indicators of significant learning. Good questions are those that force students to challenge their taken for granted assumptions and see their own underlying biases. Oftentimes the answer to a good question is irrelevant – the question is an insight in itself. The only answer to the best questions is another good question. (Wesch, 2008)

CML, in its five core concepts and five key questions of media literacy, lays out a basic framework and offers a guideline for teachers to learn the recommended instructional methods. This framework helps teachers to utilize the idea and facilitate media educational practices across curriculum in every grade level.

## 2.6 Media Education in Canadian Schools

With the advancement of emergent technologies and expansion of media culture, media educational practices have evolved in school systems for several years in many countries particularly in Canada. Canadian communication scholar Marshall McLuhan (1965) promoted the educational movement for media literacy in the 1950s and 1960s. Film courses were offered for the first time in some Canadian secondary schools and "screen education" as the first wave of media literacy movement began in the late 1960s (Pungente, 2007, p. 1). In 1966, a large gathering of media teachers from across the country took place at York University in Toronto, Ontario to lead a discussion about developing media literacy programs for Canadian schools but this first wave died out in the early 1970s. The first comprehensive approach to media literacy

manifested in Ontario by the Association for Media Literacy (AML) in 1978 (Association for Media Literacy, 2012). MediaSmarts (formerly known as Media Awareness Network) came out of a TV violence initiative launched by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) in the early 1994. It was initially housed within the Ottawa offices of the National Film Board of Canada. Since 1996, MediaSmarts has been developing digital and media literacy programs and resources for Canadian homes, schools and communities (MediaSmarts, 2014). Canada was the first country in North America to include media literacy in the school curriculum (Zylka, Muller, W., & Martins, 2011, p. 730). After Ontario, all provinces in Western Canada have mandated media education in their curricula. The province of Quebec, in their new school curriculum, also has mandated media literacy from Grade 1 to the final year of secondary school. In 1994, the Canadian Association for Media Literacy (CAME) in Vancouver, British Columbia, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education created a conceptual framework of media education, which was incorporated in Language Art curriculum for the four Western provinces.

In Saskatchewan, particularly the Saskatoon Public School Division has tried to incorporate forms of media literacy into their k-12 school curriculum. Media Literacy Saskatchewan (MLS) was founded by a group of Saskatoon educators including Mick Ellis (the first Canadian to obtain a Master's degree in Media Education, graduated from the University of London, England). Media Literacy Saskatchewan (MLS) was defined in their website as "a Special Subject Council of the Saskatchewan Teacher's Federation. Formed in 1990, its mandate is to support teachers who wish to teach media literacy skills in the classroom" (MLS, 1996). MLS's goal is to establish and maintain communication among educators; to advocate for the development and integration of media literacy in educational curricula; to influence educational

policy makers; to provide professional support; and to maintain contact with Canadian and international media literacy organizations (Pungente, 2007, p. 2).

The Saskatoon Board of Education members of MLS have developed the Tele-media unit for grade seven. They have also developed a Media Literacy guide for k-12 with the goal to integrate media literacy across curriculum in all grades. Although media literacy is considered to be an essential part of the English Language Arts and Social Studies curriculum in Saskatchewan's schools, it still remains marginal in the learning experiences of young students. In the Telemedia Manual, Telemedia is described as "a Grade 7 television production unit" that requires one complete day for production in a downtown studio and several additional hours to edit in the classroom with a loaned editing suite from the Saskatoon School Division. "The unit is designed to introduce students to the vocabulary of television production, the syntax of a commercial and an interview, as well as the practical aspects of planning, producing and editing two different television programs" (Saskatoon Public Schools, 2004, p. 2). Grade seven and eight teachers in the Saskatoon Public Schools have practiced the Telemedia unit since 2003. Many teachers are encouraged by the Saskatoon Schools Division (2004) to include the Telemedia unit as part of the communication strand in the mandated fifty hours of Practical and Applied Arts (PAA) curriculum. In the Telemedia package, the Saskatoon Public Schools Division (2004) encourages teachers to use the instructional materials and activity suggestions at their discretion. The Telemedia's instructional and activity materials include two categories of advertising (e.g., promotion, demographics, and fact vs. opinion) and representation (e.g., role of women, body image, and stereotyping). The telemedia unit was greatly influenced by the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), which has studied and promoted media educational practices in Canadian classrooms. Based on the "Kids' Take on Media" survey results, CTF

(2003) provided a list of media literacy resources and “factual information on the role of media in children’s lives and what young people themselves have to say about it” (p. i). According to CTF,

Media are powerful forces in the lives of youth. Young people are immersed in media, moving beyond geographical and regulatory boundaries as they access, absorb, communicate, create and repurpose media content. And they're doing this largely without guidance and often without reflection. To be media literate in this new environment, young people need to develop knowledge, values and a range of critical thinking, communication and information management skills - and media education is an essential tool in helping them acquire these skills. (CTF, 2014, Lines 1-7)

Based on the same concept, Youth Media Workshop (YMW), a non-profit organization, has developed various modes of media educational practice in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. YMW has been providing after-school media educational programs in Saskatoon’s elementary and high schools in an informal educational setting since 2003. They also offer media literacy workshops, as part of their community education program, for Aboriginal and immigrant youth, and inner city outreach projects for disadvantaged youth. YMW provides creative educational environments for youth to develop critical thinking and engage in creative media production while learning the technical, practical, and ethical aspects of media.

Many media advocates promote the need for integration of media literacy education across the curriculum (Stein & Prewett, 2011). Critical media literacy education is an instrumental strategy to engage students and teachers in dynamic learning activities in the classroom for cross-curricular competencies. The British Columbia Ministry of Education (2013) defines cross-curricular competencies in the following way:

At the heart of the definition of the cross-curricular competencies is the principle that education should lead to the development of the whole child—intellectually, personally, and socially. In a world of growing diversity and challenge, schools must do more than help students master the sets of knowledge and skills acquired through the standard subject areas. They must prepare students fully for their lives as individuals and as

members of society, with the capacity to achieve their goals, contribute to their communities and continue learning throughout their lives. (p. 3)

The cross-curricular competencies include interrelated components of “thinking, identity and interdependence, literacies, and social responsibility” (Saskatchewan Education, p. 11). A cross-curricular approach to teaching and learning helps children to develop critical and creative thinking, a sense of self-identity, critical citizenship, and to make sense of the world in which they live.

In their document titled “Cross-curricular Competencies”, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (2010) draws three goals for each competency, which are closely related to the goals of critical media literacy education.

Each cross-curricular competency has three K-12 goals:

Goals to develop Thinking are:

- Think and learn contextually
- Think and learn creatively
- Think and learn critically.

Goals to develop Identity and Interdependence are:

- Understand, value, and care for oneself (intellectually, emotionally, physically, spiritually)
- Understand, value, and care for others
- Understand and value social, economic, and environmental interdependence and sustainability.

Goals to develop Literacies are:

- Construct knowledge related to various literacies
- Explore and interpret the world using various literacies

- Express understanding and communicate meaning using various literacies.

Goals to develop Social Responsibility are:

- Use moral reasoning processes
- Engage in communitarian thinking and dialogue
- Take social action. (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 1)

Media Smarts, Canada's Centre for Digital and Media Literacy, included these goals in an outcomes chart and underscored the idea as "media-related outcomes from the Saskatchewan, Cross-Curricular competencies K-12" (MediaSmart, 2013). The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education stressed the use of media and technology as a means to achieve the goals of their four competencies. Subsequently, following the recommendations by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education about the importance of cross-curricular competencies, a successful integration of critical media literacy education across curriculum can play a major role to achieve the goals of competencies. Thus, the Ministry accepts that critical media literacy education greatly benefits students in their learning process by engaging them in cross-curricular activities. By engaging in critical media education as a cross-curricular theme as part of a holistic teaching and learning process, students can learn about the connectedness and relatedness in all subjects and enjoy engaging in activities for in-depth study within each content area.

## 2.7 Prospects to Integrate Critical Media Literacy in Elementary Classrooms

According to many education scholars, media in many forms in our society play a major role in determining the way people think about themselves and the world around them. Commercial corporations target young children as consumers. These children identify themselves within market-constructed stereotypes and certain modes of behaviours that greatly affect their lifestyle (Kellner, 2001; Habermas, 1989; and Giroux, 1997). They believe the

current manipulative lifestyles have been pushing people, particularly children, away from being active participants for critical thinking, creative expression, and democratic citizenship.

Education plays a key role in providing dynamic learning environment for children to identify and express their needs while learning the practical and ethical aspects of media literacy. The learning process, as McComb & Whisler (1997) define it, “is a process of discovering and constructing meaning from information and experience, filtered through the learner's unique perceptions, thoughts, and feelings” (p. 5). It is vitally important to recognize and explore the positive potentials of critical media education as a learning process. The recognition and exploration of such potentials can set a mandate for manifestation of a dynamic learning environment to alleviate the negative effects of media and allow youth to critically reflect on the media messages and their underlying meanings, to become active participants in social democratic affairs and be advocates of creative expression in public sphere.

In relation to traditional literacy that advocates the adoption of critical perspectives toward reading and writing, critical media literacy extends the concept of literacy. Critical media literacy promotes the development of critical reflection and creative engagement to analyze, interpret, evaluate, and understand media messages (reading) and the ability to create dialogues and media messages in the form of productions (writing) in a variety of contexts (Buckingham, 2003). It is about giving youth access to the means of cultural production and creative expression, and encouraging them to use those means in a thoughtful and critical way. (Lahiji, 2008). In ideal critical media educational practices in elementary classrooms, children learn and develop critical and creative thinking to deconstruct complex media messages in advertisements and other forms of information they receive from a variety of sources such as radio, television, magazines, newspapers, signs, billboards, and the Internet. Through the process of critical media



education, children learn, understand, and evaluate the underlying ideas and meanings behind these constructed messages and identify their language of persuasion through discussions and debates in classrooms with their fellow classmates and teachers, and at home and community gatherings with their family members and friends. With proper technical skills and access to media tools and resources; students can create their own media representation, share with their peers, family, and community, and become an active participant and responsible citizens for positive social change.

Media education as an educational process comprises critical reading/viewing (critical thinking) and creative writing/producing (creative thinking). Saskatchewan Education (1988) identifies the interrelations and complementary aspects of critical and creative thinking in the following way: “Creative thinking is generally considered to be involved with the creation or generation of ideas, processes, experiences or objects; critical thinking is concerned with their evaluation” (Saskatchewan Education, 1988, p. 33). The importance of developing both critical and creative thinking is supported by critical pedagogical theory as the basis for critical media literacy, which shows that media production has the potential to help students explore their self-identities (Goodman, 2003; Kellner & Share, 2007; Garcia, Seglem, & Share, 2013). According to Garcia, Seglem, and Share (2013),

Critical media literacy as we are defining it here is a progressive educational response that expands the notion of literacy to include different forms of mass communication, popular culture, and new technologies and also deepens literacy education to critically analyze relationships between media and audiences, information, and power. Along with this analysis, alternative media production is an essential component of critical media literacy as it empowers students to create their own messages that can challenge media texts and narratives. (p. 111)

Critical media literacy attempts to recognize the media messages and uncover the underlying ideological frameworks and the links to their power relations (Bazalgette, 1989).

Kellner & Kahn (2003) stress the importance of teaching media literacy as a participatory and collaborative project by learning to use media tools for self-expression and social activism. Kellner (1998), Share (2009), and Jenkins (2009) believe that critical media literacy provides participatory and collaborative lifelong learning experiences, which begins in childhood and continues into adulthood. Critical media literacy offers engaging ways to explore a variety of topics and issues and its process becomes more exciting and effective when children learn and teach through peer collaborative interaction at school, home, and community. Kafai & Peppler (2011) stress the importance of critical media literacy as an extension to the traditional idea of literacy “- an extension that sees creative designs, ethical considerations, and technical skills as part of youth's expressive and intellectual engagement with media as participatory competencies” (p. 1).

According to Jenkins (2009), critical media literacy raises questions about: media agencies (who is communicating and why?), media categories (what type of message is it?), media technologies (how is it produced?), media audiences (who receives it and what sense do they make of it?), media languages (how do we know what it means?), and media presentations (how does it present its subject?). Question asking, problem posing, and dialogue stimulate the development of awareness of how social forces are influencing people's lives and how people can better articulate their own experiences to facilitate genuine empowerment in communities through sharing information, reflection, collaborations, and expressive contributions. For Shor (1992), empowering education is a critical and democratic pedagogy of learning for self and social transformation that provides a creative space for dialogue among teachers, students and projects in exploring everyday themes, social issues, and academic knowledge. Through dialogue and problem posing, students become active agents of their learning. The vision of

media literacy is to cultivate an educational environment where youth as active citizens in democratic society can develop their abilities to critically analyze, evaluate and reflect on the underlying messages and representations of social realities shaped by the media in popular culture, and make informed decisions about media viewing and producing (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

Critical media education is a pedagogical process for critical media literacy. It is grounded with a theoretical framework in critical media pedagogy. Critical media pedagogy is a theory of learning in media education. It provides comprehensive conceptual understandings of critical media educational processes. Critical media pedagogy seeks to understand how media culture and media industries interact with the economic and political structures and stimulates the development of awareness of how social forces are influencing people's lives and how people can better articulate their own experiences, to create and share information, and to facilitate genuine empowerment in communities (Lahiji, 2008). The critical and creative process of media educational practice is reflected in forms of images (still or motion pictures), music, sounds, voices, dialogues, texts, and ideas through understanding and appreciating the language of media enhanced by practical experience producing and utilizing that language (Lahiji, 2008). This process engages students into critical reading and viewing that involves decoding media messages, challenging dominant media discourse, and critically analyzing media's social implications and their effects (reflection). Students also engage in critical writing and producing which involves learning various production techniques by using media technologies for self-expression and developing progressive ideas to create their own representations through creative media production (action).

Reflection and action are essential to the process in which learners identify the assumptions governing their actions, locate the sources of the assumptions, question the meaning of the assumptions, and develop alternative ways for their actions (Cranton, 1996). Through this process, learners can interpret and create new knowledge driven by their own experiences. This creative process stimulates students' critical thinking and creative expressions in an authentic, meaningful, and unified learning environment; and makes learning relevant and builds a strong interdependent relationship between teachers and students and contemporary society.

By putting theory into practice, critical media education provides an authentic learning environment that is both an active and reflective process. This is an educational process that Freire calls praxis. It involves thoughts (reflection) and the human experiences (action) combining to meaningfully create new knowledge and develop a critical consciousness (Freire, 1972, 1973). Critical consciousness offers a revolutionary approach to education that promotes raising awareness of oppressive socio-economic and political structures and taking actions against such structures individually and collectively towards social change.

According to Shor (1993), critical consciousness has four qualities: the awareness of power relations within society; the critical literacy to be pro-active in relating and challenging these relationships; the capacity to re-learn new patterns of socialization; and the skills and meta-cognitive ability to engage in life-long learning. For both Freire (1972, 1973) and Shor (1993), critical consciousness is the capacity to reflect critically upon socio-political and economic oppression and to take action creatively to alleviate these oppressive elements towards positive social transformation. The concept of learning by doing as a self-reflexive process (Giddens, 1991) is an essential part of critical media literacy. As Aristotle says, "for the things we have to learn before we can do, we learn by doing" (1103a32, as cited in Mertz, 2002, p. 1). The self-

reflexive process contributes to self-identity and lifelong learning that requires ongoing exploration, construction of the self, and transformation. It recognizes that “the altered self has to be explored and constructed as part of a reflexive process of connecting personal and social change” (Giddens, 1991, p. 33). For Giddens an individual’s capacity for consciousness, authenticity, and willingness to continuously change self, projects and reflects in altering circumstances impacts positive social change. Educational environments might initiate a positive influence on youth towards positive social change. Dudhade (2012) underscores the importance of education as being an agent of social change.

While, on one hand, it is responsible for handing down traditions, customs, culture, knowledge and skills from one generation to other, on the other, it acts as an agent of social change. New ideas and values are initiated by it and become the goals of the young generation to pursue and achieve. (p. 69)

Being an agent of social change is the individual’s capacity to notice all available choices, to make an informed decision to choose actions, and to implement those actions in society. Darling-Hammond emphasizes that, “Research suggests that teachers, next to students, are the most powerful influence on their colleagues and that the work of teacher leaders can trump the efforts of policy makers or administrators to change practice” (Darling-Hammond, 2003, as cited in Latimer, 2012, p. 15). Teachers play an important role as leaders to facilitate a dynamic learning environment for students to engage in a critical and meaningful means of cultural production and creative expression.

Elementary school teachers teach most, if not all, of the subjects in their classrooms and because of their particular position, they develop a profound role and ability to create a unifying, harmonious, and influential learning environment for students to develop critical media awareness and creativity. Although attending professional development workshops in critical media literacy education is very important for elementary school teachers, teaching and learning

critical media literacy education must be mandated in teacher education programs at the universities. Elementary teacher candidates must develop their critical media literacy and create a digital portfolio during their training in the teacher education program that contains critical media projects and cross-curricular activities for their teachings in the classrooms. Guzman & Nussbaum (2009) state,

A central requirement for teacher training processes is to turn out skilled educators who can perform their labors in dynamic and heterogeneous situations and have the necessary competencies for integrating their knowledges in support of decisions related to the challenges of their professional activity. (p. 454)

Well-trained teacher candidates become leaders and facilitators of authentic learning environments, and become agents of positive change alongside their students in the classroom. Teachers' authentic leadership has a great positive impact on the direction of children's development. It provides an environment with interdependent relationship that allows students to develop circles of influence and become agents of change by actively engaging in critical reflection and creative expression in their community of peers, friends and families.

There is urgency for implementing critical media literacy in teacher education programs and elementary school curricula "given the crucial role of media as they touch every issue impacting human life in society" (Torres & Mercado, 2006, p. 260). According to Torres & Mercado (2006), critical media literacy includes three dimensions that must be considered for successful and sustained integration in schools:

(1) develop a critical understanding of how corporate for-profit media work, driven by their political and economic vested interests; (2) search for and support alternative, nonprofit media; and (3) characterize the role of teachers in helping students and their parents to become media-literate users and supporters of alternative media. (Torres & Mercado, 2006, p. 260)

Building an interdependent and caring relationship between teachers and students plays an important role in developing a student's critical thinking and creative expression. Teachers

can help students to critically question the validity of the information obtained from the wide variety of computer-mediated and networking technologies and provide interdependent pedagogical student-teacher relationships that strengthen students' critical and creative thinking abilities for informed decision-making and self-expression in life. This educational environment might set out solid grounds for youth, as agents of change, to engage actively in creative expression and develop powerful circles of influence in their community of friends and families. Positively, the evolution and compounding growth of youth circles of influence, with authentic interdependent relationships, initiate the building blocks for sustainable and dynamic growing communities. Critical media pedagogy offers a basic theoretical foundation and critical pedagogical strategies for students and teachers in elementary classrooms' cross-curricular activities, which are instrumental to promote learning about diversity, empathy, interdependent relationships, and human agency for positive transformation.

## 2.8 Summary

This chapter has explored the related literature in critical media educational practices in elementary classrooms. It has reviewed literature around the three research sub-questions related to context, process, and outcome in critical media educational practices. The related literature has included topics that explored the relationships and connectedness of art, beauty, aesthetic experience, the importance of art as an agent for purposeful creative expression, perspectives on critical media literacy, and media educational processes and outcomes. As the literature review has illustrated, art as the vehicle and agent for purposeful creative human expression, can help students to reflect their understanding of self and the world. The creative expression as purposeful reflections of thought and feeling can be explored through a variety of artistic media. Education as a process of teaching and learning allows students to reflect their worldviews

through creative forms of artistic expressions. Many forms of new media and communication technologies provide unique and advanced ways of teaching and learning in elementary classrooms. By engaging in critical media education as a cross-curricular theme in a holistic experience of teaching and learning process, students can learn about the connectedness and relatedness across the curriculum. Critical media education provides an authentic teaching and learning environment that encourages active engagement in critical thinking and creative expression.

Teachers' perspectives of media educational practices and their leadership can influence significantly the direction of children's development. There is a great potential for elementary school teachers to develop cross-curricular competency in the instructional framework and facilitate dynamic teaching and learning environments that allow students to engage actively in critical media educational practices and become agents of change in their community of peers, friends and families.

The review of contemporary literature on critical media literacy education has examined a body of literature relating toward the concepts of context, process, and outcome in the research questions. It has provided a ground for a qualitative research, adapting a case study method using semi-structured interviews to explore the perspectives of elementary school teachers who critically reflect upon their media educational practices in the classroom.



## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The theoretical framework informed by the insights from critical social theory and educational perspectives in sociology and philosophy provides a foundation for critical media literacy practices highlighting the successes and challenges of elementary school teachers in implementing media literacy into school curricula. In order to investigate these issues, I undertook a case study directed to explore possibilities for creative expression through digital media production as a means of assisting learners in exploring their self-identities, developing critical thinking, practicing creativity, and representing their social position. This focus derives from contemporary literature on critical media literacy education and my research interests to explore perspectives of elementary school teachers through their critical reflection upon their own experiences in relation to media educational practices. An important goal of this thesis has been to create a streamlined document of research concerning the value and practical applications of such methods as a way to make use of scholarly ideas on the significance of media educational practices in elementary schools and to validate and give voice to media teachers' experiences, challenges, and accomplishments.

In order to address my research question, I employ qualitative research in the form of a case study approach to obtain comprehensive data that provides in-depth insights into participants' lived experiences within the context of media educational practices in elementary school classrooms. Case study, according to Hamilton (2011), "focuses on the idea of a bounded unit which is examined, observed, described and analysed in order to capture key components of the case" (p. 2). As part of data collection and besides the critical analysis of classical and contemporary literature, I employed interviews in order to gain insights from practicing teachers.

According to Kvale (1983), the qualitative research interview is "an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena" (p.174). My interviews with seven elementary school teachers, selected using recommendations from the Saskatoon Public Schools Division, focused on the significance of media educational practices in elementary schools and a variety of aspects of critical media literacy.

### 3.1 Research Questions

This research is guided by the following questions:

Primary research question: "What are elementary school teachers' understandings of critical media education in the classroom?" This primary research question seeks to determine the significance of integrating critical media education in elementary school's curricula and to identify obstacles that prevent successful integration process. This research question has been shaped by an understanding of critical reflection and creative engagement in the classroom, which will be shown to have a direct correlation to the use of media educational practice.

Sub-questions: The following sub-questions have been used to inform the primary research question in three categories including contexts, processes, and outcomes. They highlight the in-depth understanding of critical media pedagogy as a theory of learning in media education and will inquire how the theory provides a dynamic framework for the approaches available to professional educators.

Contexts - What are the critical contexts of media educational practices that must be better understood? Basic questions include: What is media education? What is critical agency in the classroom? Where do media educational practices happen? Who is engaging in these practices? What kinds of supports are being provided? And how are these practices sustained?

Processes - What are the instructional processes in media educational practices that must be better understood? Basic questions include: What is being taught about mass media in elementary schools? What is being taught about critical thinking and creative expression? How is it being taught? What are the obstacles and advantages of different methods of instruction? What are the possibilities and limitations in media literacy integration in elementary schools' curricula?

Outcomes - What are the criteria for measuring competencies in media education outcomes? Basic questions include: What skills, attitudes or behaviors of children should be measured? What skills and knowledge do children already possess? What is the relationship between knowledge and attitude or behavioral outcomes? What are the ways of effectiveness of media educational practices for developing critical and creative agents of change in elementary classrooms?

These sub-questions were included in the interview schedule as interview questions for all participants (included in Appendix B). The interview questions were structured in a progressive manner that helped participants to experience a sense of ease and continuity for expressing their perspectives on each question.

### 3.2 Data Analysis

Through data collected from the interviews, I described and analyzed personal teaching experiences to understand the media educational and cultural experiences of educators and students in elementary schools. I undertook a detailed reading of the interviews in order to work out a comprehensive understanding of the material for the coding process. The coding process required extensive reading of transcripts and listening to the corresponding audio recordings to have an in-depth understanding of the data to be categorized for thematic analysis. Through such

extensive readings and listening, many keywords, concepts, expressions emerged for coding closely related to the themes, were derived from research sub-questions. I then organized the data based on research sub-questions in themes and the codes as the contents of each theme (Table 1, p. 67).

I employ a thematic analysis to provide context for the findings of the interviews. In qualitative data, thematic analysis is a strategy of discovering patterns, categorizing and sorting data into categories and developing themes. Thematic analysis “offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data” (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 77). The data are analyzed and discussed based on the major themes, the content of each theme, and their relation to the literature and their implications for future media educational practices in elementary classrooms. The coding and the inducing of categories and themes helped to engage with and make sense of the data generated. The emphasis was on a clear description of media teachers’ experiences, their perspectives on social impact of media educational practices in elementary schools, and on examining the diverse ways in which participants’ ideas are socially constructed and negotiated.

### 3.3 Limitations and Delimitations

This research does not provide detailed recommendations for media educational activities or teaching materials that can be used in classrooms. The study was set out to explore a coherent conceptual and practical analysis of the dynamics of creativity in critical media literacy and its applications in school curricula. This work is especially oriented to observe and understand how media teachers’ strategies, perceptions, experiences, challenges, and aspirations reflect upon the enhancement of media educational practice.

Because the sample size in this study was limited to seven participants from four elementary schools in one school division, the researcher sought not to generalize conclusions due to the small sample but to make available the findings and conclusions of this research, which may provide valuable insights regarding media educational practices for other elementary schools in different regions and school divisions. A potential limitation to this study can be my presence as a researcher at the time of interviews, which can influence the perceptions of the participants who may respond to the questions that satisfy the researcher's bias rather than expressing their true opinions.

This research also may carry potential bias in participants' views and influence arising from my position as a media educator and researcher, my interpretations and assumptions. Despite the potential limitations, this research provides positive and meaningful prospects for setting out an authentic media educational framework that promotes teachers' and students' active engagement in critical thinking and creative expression towards individual well-being and social change.

### 3.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval and permission were granted by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) and the Saskatoon Public School Board due to the involvement of human participants. All the volunteer participants in this study signed a consent form before participating in the study. They had the option to leave the research study at any time, and signed a release form before their data have been used.

### 3.5 Participants

As part of data collection and besides the critical analysis of classical and contemporary literature, I interviewed seven elementary school teachers in order to explore the significance of

media educational practices in elementary schools and a variety of aspects of critical media literacy. The participants' ideas are employed as sources of data. All seven teachers who volunteered to be participants in this study were teachers in the Saskatoon Public Schools Division (SPSD), which is the largest school system in Saskatoon and is the second largest in Saskatchewan. Saskatoon Public Schools has approximately 22,000 students with 44 elementary schools and 10 high schools. All these teachers have practiced forms of media education in their teachings in grade seven or eight and most have experienced teaching the Tele-media unit in different levels of engagement.

All participants in this study have been assigned pseudonyms for confidentiality. School names and their locations have been excluded from this report to keep the anonymity of participant teachers.

### 3.6 Recruitment Materials and Consent

I derived an initial list of possible participants from Saskatoon Public Schools Division. Based on this list, I approached potential participants by presenting them an invitation package which included an invitation letter outlining the details of the study (see Appendix A), a copy of the individual interview questions (see Appendix B), a copy of the data release form (see Appendix C), and consent form information (see Appendix D). All consent forms were signed in duplicate, with one form for each participant and the other collected by me. Participants were provided with a self-addressed stamped envelope for convenient return of the forms, or they had the choice to scan and return the signed consent forms through email.

Prior to each interview, I reviewed with each participant their rights and the ethical standards in relation to the study. The invitation letter and consent form both state that participation is entirely voluntary. The participants could contact me or/and my supervisor

during the study if they wished to withdraw their consent to participate in the study and have their previous information destroyed. The contact information was included in the invitation letter and consent form.

Prior to each interview, I asked each participant's permission to record the interview on an audio recorder. I explained that the audio recorder can be stopped at any point during the interview. If any participant was uncomfortable with audio recording, I would not record the interview; rather, with the participant's permission, I would take notes during the interview. I also explained to participants they could refuse to answer questions if they were uncomfortable doing so. Following each interview, copies of the written transcript/notes of the interview were sent by mail to each participant. The participants read their interview transcript/notes and alter, delete, and change any information they wished to clarify their ideas.

All participants signed a Data/Transcript Release Form (see Appendix C) to acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects their ideas during the interviews and to authorize the release of the transcript. Participants were provided with a self-addressed stamped envelope for convenient return of the altered transcripts and the Data/Transcript Release Form, or they had the choice to scan and return these signed documents through email. None of the participants expressed any concerns about the interview process or transcripts.

Following ethics approval by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board, I obtained written informed consent for the study from the Saskatoon Public Schools Division. Following the Public Schools Division's approval, I began the process of selecting seven elementary school teachers who have been involved in the Tele-Media program in Saskatoon elementary public schools. To ensure anonymity in the selection of teacher participants, I supplied the superintendents at the Saskatoon Public Schools Division with a recruitment letter to distribute to

potential participants on my behalf. This letter included information about the study and invited the potential participants to contact me if they were interested in participating my study. The final selection of teachers who participated in semi-structured individual interviews was based on individual interest and represented diversity of gender, ethnicity, and teaching experience. After receiving participant permission, the individual interviews were audio recorded. Each individual interview was conducted for approximately one hour after school hours in their classrooms.

### 3.7 Methods/Procedures

I employed a qualitative methodology to document the perspectives of Saskatoon elementary schools' teachers in accordance with the aims of this kind of research which seeks to explore the reflective thoughts and meaning represented through both the participants' and the researcher's experiential, propositional, and practical knowledge (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Integrating critical social theory and constructivist learning theory provides a foundation for understanding critical media pedagogy and applying it as a theory of learning in media educational practices. This approach supports the continued development of critical media pedagogies that aids students to develop critical thinking and creative expression through active engagement in cross-curricular media educational activities.

Once each interview had been completed, I personally transcribed the interview, utilizing this process as an initial form of data analysis (Silverman, 2005). I reviewed the Transcripts/Notes to provide additional familiarity with their contents (Cole & Knowles, 2000). Thereafter, I created a preliminary list of key words and ideas based on all participants' interviews, their commonalities, and differences in the transcripts (Basit, 2003 & Stake, 2005). The relevant patterns and categories of participants' ideas were expanded to larger themes in response to the research questions (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Creswell, 1998). All interviews



have been reviewed several times to ensure the accuracy of the data representing each theme and addressing the research questions. I have written a reflective journal during the data collection process. According to Schwartz, Lederman & Crawford (2004), writing a reflective journal is an effective way to explore, connect, and provide deep understanding of the research.

### 3.8 Summary

I address my research questions through a qualitative case study in order to obtain data through interviews with seven elementary school teachers. Interviews focused on the significance of critical media educational practices in the elementary school classrooms. Individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted by using several open-ended questions. The participants were selected based on recommendations from the Saskatoon Public Schools Division; and participant responses to the interview questions have been the sources of data for the study. The thematic analysis of the data provided context for the findings of the interviews. In arriving at these themes, I coded and identified categories to engage with and make sense of data generated. The emphasis was on a clear description of media teachers' experiences and their perspectives on the significance of media educational practices in elementary schools.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of information collected from interviews with study participants. The participants' perceptions are presented in a narrative form with the aim to describe the phenomena accurately and to give voice to their experiences with regard to the implementation of media educational practices in the classroom. Through my initial analysis, I identified five themes, with thematic analysis organized around three categories of interview questions: context, process, and outcome, as main elements of research sub-questions. These five themes include: *the contexts of media education, agency of change, engagements and supports in media education, the instructional processes in media education, and measuring competencies in media education outcomes.*

#### 4.1 Reviewing the Research Purpose

The discussion that follows is based on my intent to explore the perspectives of selected elementary school teachers about media educational practices in the elementary classrooms, in part to explore how these practices might assist learners to explore their self-identities, develop critical thinking, express and practice creativity, represent their social position, and foster critical consciousness.

#### 4.2 The Characteristics of Participants

All seven teachers who volunteered to be participants in this study have been teaching in Saskatoon Public Schools Division (SPSD) for periods ranging from five to twenty-eight years. All these teachers have practiced some forms of media education in their teachings in grade seven or eight and most of them have experienced teaching the Tele-media unit in different

levels of engagement. The participants are referred to as Kathy, Ted, Martin, Carl, Helen, Henry, and Don (all pseudonyms).

Kathy- Kathy has been teaching with Saskatoon Public Schools for about twenty years. She taught French immersion in the elementary area and grades four to eight in the English stream. She has been teaching grade eight for a few years.

Ted- Ted has been teaching about twenty-three years. Before teaching in Saskatoon, he taught in a First Nations reserve for three years. He also taught in secondary school for nine years. While teaching in elementary schools, he has taught most subject areas including English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, physical education, and career education. He has taught in middle years (grades 6-8) for most his teaching career.

Martin- Martin has taught grade seven and eight for eight years in a variety of subjects including math, English language arts, social studies, science, and physical education.

Carl- Carl has taught in elementary schools for about five years. He has taught a variety of subjects including science, health, physical education, and career education in grade eight. He also has taught language arts, physical education, and health in grade six. Before teaching in elementary schools, he has taught some industrial related courses in a post-secondary facility.

Helen- Helen has taught grade eight for the last twelve years. She also has taught in a program for gifted students. She has many years of experience teaching the Tele-media unit as well as practicing forms of media education across the curriculum.

Henry- Henry has taught mostly middle years (grades six, seven, eight, and nine) for the last twenty-eight plus years and he is keenly interested in the media education and Tele-media projects. He has taught the Tele-media unit for about eighteen years, moving from VHS to digital and DVDs.

Don- Don has a master’s degree in education, and his teaching background in elementary schools is almost exclusively within grades seven and eight. Don enjoys teaching most subjects but his major interest is teaching social studies, media literacy, technology integration, and math.

#### 4.3 Major Themes, their Contents, and Thematic Analysis

As demonstrated in Table 1, I identified the major themes and the content of each theme with the use of research sub-questions as a structured and organized guide that sequentially were helpful to lay out a set of thematic analyses. The research sub-questions were used to inform the primary research question in three categories including contexts, processes, and outcomes. I summarized the major themes based on identifying the keywords, which emerged from the research sub-questions as well as the process of coding and comparing the interview data.

Table 1: Major themes and content of each theme from interview data

Major Themes	Contents of Theme
The contexts of media education	Media production and creative expression / critical media literacy education / inquiry-based learning / cross-curricular activities /
	Critical thinking / analyzing / persuasion / creativity
	Access to technology-based facilities / learning technical skills / making media production
	Representation / conveying positive messages / audiences
Agency of change	Active and meaningful engagement / challenging peers / creating dialogue / creating circle of influence / being creative producers of media / conveying effective messages
	Teachers’ role in classroom / having access to technology and resources / integrating media education into curriculum to enhance learning / learning outcome / collaborative learning process and achieving the desired outcome /

	Being responsible and effective citizens / being informed decision-makers / agency for individual and social change / creating emotional resonance to promote intentional positive change
Engagements and supports in media education	Active engagements of students, teachers, and parents / hands-on teaching and learning resources / conceptual and technical teaching resources / involvement of community, educators, and media industry / training and upgrading as professional development in media technology / need for media specialists in schools
The instructional processes in media education	Having media and technology courses in teacher education program / Critical thinking and creative expression / Cross-curricular activities / Teaching and learning about mass media / possibilities and limitations for integration / access to media and technology / class sizes / time constraint for preparing resources / teachers' concerns for using digital media devices and Internet connection / including activities with the use of media and technology in classroom everyday / media integration begins in teacher education program /
Measuring competencies in media education outcomes	Skills and knowledge of children / teachers' role to be mentors and offer conceptual directions for critical thinking and creative expression / effective media education for elementary classrooms /
	Measuring competencies and assessment based on the definition of media literacy, using rubric for measuring competencies in media educational activities / self-assessment and peer-assessment / measuring skills, attitudes and behaviours of children in media education outcome / creativity and originality / each student have unique way and pace for learning and producing / children learn and teach in peer collaborative interaction / the role of parents
	Ways of effectiveness of media education / learning and teaching ethics / professional development in critical media education / offering critical media literacy for teacher candidates in teacher education program

All the participants expressed positive views regarding media education and its significance for developing critical thinking and creativity. The following section reflects

teachers' perceptions drawn from interview data, organized in accordance with the five key themes summarized in Table 1:

- The Contexts of media education
- Agency of change
- Engagements and supports in media education
- The Instructional processes in media education
- Competencies in media education outcome

For clarification purposes, in some of the participants' direct quotes, whenever there were some irrelevant or less relevant parts of a sentence, dots (...) have been used to indicate the removal of that part of the sentence. The interpretations and thematic analyses follow providing relevant context for the findings based on the key themes, and the contents of each theme.

#### 4.3.1 The Contexts of media education

Teachers discussed a range of opinions about the critical contexts of media educational practices through the Tele-media unit in grades seven and eight, and media education in general, particularly within subjects such as English Language Art and Social Studies. According to some teachers, the Tele-media unit offers very basic instructions in terms of conceptual and technical content. The Tele-media introduces students to the basics of Television Production while producing a commercial project in a media studio at the Saskatoon Public Schools Division. Students spend only one day shooting for the commercial in the studio and one week for editing in the classroom with one editing suite borrowed from Saskatoon Public Schools Division (SPSD). It provides very limited media activities in a short time that do not engage students in critical thinking and creative expression. Teachers expressed their experience with the Tele-media unit in terms of the length of the unit, the type and level of instruction, and the

degree of the engagement by both teachers and students. Since the Tele-media unit is not a mandatory activity in elementary classrooms, only some teachers chose to teach it as a Practical and Applied Art (PAA) curricular activity. However, there is a good potential to use the resources, if available, to implement and integrate critical media literacy education in a variety of subjects.

Teachers considered media education as an inquiry-based learning environment in which students engage in action-oriented processes. These action-oriented processes, as teachers imply, require creative educational environments that allow exploratory engagement of students to critically analyze, evaluate, and understand the messages of media and their meanings as well as creatively express their opinions by producing their own media representations. Students need to be active participants within this learning process by critically questioning, having dialogues, understanding a variety of viewpoints, and producing media in a variety of contexts.

Most teachers agreed that although children are technologically savvy, and have easy access to a variety of media and communication devices, the majority of them do not have the necessary competencies to understand, analyze, and evaluate media messages and their underlying meanings. They also expressed concerns about the deficient access to media production facilities and resources in their schools and hoped to have more access beyond what the existing Tele-media unit activities offer.

All teachers expressed their opinions about the importance of engaging students in more media educational practices in order to learn about the power and persuasiveness of advertisements and messages they receive through media. They stressed that students' readiness and attraction to using multi-media for developing critical reading/viewing and critical thinking through unpacking or deconstructing media messages, and creative expression by producing

media and conveying effective and positive messages could make a difference and change in self and community.

Teachers also highlighted critical media literacy's creative approach to learning through the use of cross-curricular activities that extends the enhancement of learning beyond the traditional approach of reading and writing. Their opinions about media literacy imply the notion of empowering children through critical reading/viewing (reflection) and creative writing/producing media (action). Critical reflection refers to critical thinking that includes decoding media messages, challenging dominant media discourse, and critically analyzing media's social implications and their effects. Creative action refers to creative producing which includes learning various media production techniques, developing progressive ideas to create their own representations, and using media technologies for creative expressions.

Teachers highlight the important role that elementary teachers play in empowering children to develop a good sense of their own self and abilities and flexibilities in their learning process. Teaching how media operate and the technical aspects of media, extends students' knowledge and encourages them to engage in the creative process of media production. Most teachers focused on the importance of creative production rather than just emphasize critical thinking. They emphasized having both critical thinking and creative media production as equal and important components of critical media literacy education.

Kathy talked about Tele-media as a unit in Saskatoon Public Schools that is offered to students in grade seven and eight. She views Tele-media as a positive unit for students' development in critical thinking and learning about persuasion in media through conducting interviews and producing their own television commercials. She expressed her opinion about Tele-media in the following way:



[W]hat is built into our system is the Tele-media program, where again we view, we analyze, then we turn around and try and create something that persuades. So that's the creative expression it's taking what you're learning and ... making it an intrinsic sort of thing and then being able to put your own spin on that, on the other end. So Tele-media is the representation. (Kathy, p. 2, lines 81-89)

In her statement, Kathy passionately expressed her belief in the effectiveness of media education and its creative approach to learning. "... the more critically kids look at things the more debate and discussion comes within their social circle on issues" (Kathy, p. 1, lines 39-4). Furthermore, Kathy defined media education as a process of learning in a creative educational environment that allows exploring the messages of media and their meanings. Media education, as Kathy expressed, "is the instilling of that will and that ability to investigate below the surface level - things that, information that we're presented with every day" (p. 2, lines 53-54).

Kathy noted the power and persuasiveness of advertisements and messages that children receive through media and emphasized the importance of having effective critical media literacy education in elementary classrooms.

... we're presented with it in so many different forms, I mean every time you pick up a piece of printed materials, you know, newspapers, journals, that sort of thing, and students are constantly surfing; and you know kids don't realize that when we were growing up, it was television advertising and now they are so bombarded with so many icons of, symbols of advertising on the computer. It's subliminal. I don't think they even see it; it's right there. It's always flashing. You know, I think the fact that kids are online and on-screen so much that they are constantly bombarded with that. We are always bombarded with it but I think being explicit critics of it is something that is not implicit, I

think it's something that needs to be taught. Right? Unless you're looking for it, you don't see it unless you're aware of it, right? So that's what we try to do. (Kathy, p. 3, lines 92-98)

Kathy noted an important issue that is a great challenge in elementary classrooms. Although students are technologically savvy and have easy access to media and communication devices, most of them are not necessarily media literate. They do not have the necessary competencies to critically reflect, understand, and analyze media messages presented to them.

In his response, Ted described Tele-media as a unit that provides a learning environment for “representing comprehension and understanding in a way other than reading and writing” (Ted, p. 1, lines 16-17). Ted highlighted the concept of critical media literacy beyond the traditional ways of reading and writing. His statement about media literacy implies the idea of encouraging students to develop critical and creative thinking abilities for analyzing, interpreting, evaluating, and understanding media messages (reading) as well as the ability to create their own media representation (writing). Ted emphasized the creative element of video production as an important component of media education for critical thinking and creativity in media educational practices.

... it's in the form of learning how to create and create a video production and of course view critically - view video productions that are produced by their fellow classmates. You know, in the classroom, we will do representation in different ways. It might be through language arts. I think a lot of people think of it as just reading and writing but I'll have my students represent some understanding maybe with the collage or a drawing or something like that and again in the case of Tele-media, it's through the producing of video production. (Ted, p. 1, lines 17-23)

Ted implies that there are many forms of creative expression other than the traditional concept of reading and writing. He expressed his satisfying feeling about student's interest in creative expression through art making including media production. Ted perceived media education as inquiry-based learning approach in which students engage in an action-oriented process of acquiring knowledge. He implied that students need to be active participants of this learning approach by critically questioning, having dialogues, understanding a variety of viewpoints, and producing media in variety of formats.

Media education is where students are learning to understand the techniques and impact of media messages and a key to that is learning to ask questions and then facilitating inquiry which is a part of our learning is an inquiry approach were students are arriving at answers by asking questions and that's the same thing here and then having a dialogue based on questions that that students posed and you know, having conversations and understanding different viewpoints ... another part of media education in our cases is learning how to produce media in different formats whether it is a newspaper in the classroom or in the case of Tele-media, video production. (Ted, p. 2, lines 51-58).

Ted emphasized that cross-curricular media educational activities and the engagement of many parents in discussing media messages with their children extend far beyond the Tele-media unit. Ted's ideas highlighted the interdisciplinary nature of critical media education and how children can potentially learn, understand, and evaluate the underlying meanings behind the constructed messages through group discussions and debates with their peers, teachers, and family members.

I think it's not just Tele-media so it's not just something that happens once a year for a few weeks during a Tele-media unit happens- it's ongoing. So for instance, part of our

classroom routine in the classroom here is to discuss issues in the news I guess current events would be the way to describe it and as we do that we're not just sharing information, we also have a conversation where students have a chance to ask questions about what would somebody said or maybe form an opinion on it. We talk, we agree or disagree, we discuss and debate different points of view on a topic and that sort of thing we do here. It's not just happening in the classroom and happens at home too because my students when they oftentimes want to share a current event from home or an opinion at home, they want to tell me, "*well, my mom or my dad was telling me about this and we are talking about this at home*". So they're coming to school with a lot of ideas that are developed at home too. (Ted, p. 2, lines 59-69)

Ted continued, talking about the integration of media educational practices across curriculum that is more practical in elementary classrooms than in high school. Practicing media education in elementary school classroom, Ted expressed, is

a little easier to facilitate that being cross curricular is unlike a high school where I might just teach one or two subject areas... I'm teaching half a dozen different subject areas so it gives me a good opportunity to integrate things in several different subject areas. (Ted, p. 2, lines 91-93)

Ted brings to light the special position of elementary school teachers. Because elementary teachers teach most of the subjects in their classrooms, they potentially develop a great understanding and ability to integrate media educational practices across the curriculum. Ted specifically talked about the relevancy of practicing media education across curriculum such as English Language Art, Social Studies, and Science:

Media literacy is part of the language arts but it's also a key part of social studies as well. So it's happening throughout the curriculum also you know for instance it happens not just in Language Arts but it happens very much in Social Studies. For instance, in science my class was engaged in a unit on ecosystems and a lot of that was the environment and so as we were teaching different things in that science unit lots of news events related to the environment come up so we have those discussions come up in those subjects as well. (Ted, p. 2, Lines 73-79)

Ted's ideas on the importance of integrating media education across the curriculum is indicative of the teachers' realization for inevitable inclusion and change of the ways of teaching and learning in elementary classrooms.

Martin described Tele-media as a learning practice "related to the construction of television media" (p. 1, lines 12-13). Martin also talked about his ideas of incorporating media educational activities in English Language Art and Social Studies classes. Martin stated, "we've done lots of different projects -- we've created newspapers, we've created editorial articles and things like that in order to understand that these things are constructions and that there are biases and opinions that are included in them" (p. 1, lines 32-35). Martin implies the importance of the use of cross-curricular activities for integrating media education across the curriculum. He described those activities as

... looking critically at different forms of media like news, online media, film, and other forms of media that are presenting information to students and in trying to look at how that stuff is a construction of different ideas and biases and looking at trying to analyze the different components that may go into that -- the different purposes for why are the authors or the creators of the these projects doing what they're doing and what are some

of the things that we see repeated between different media projects in terms of patterns of construction how are, you know, beginning, middle and end in and what goes in the beginning, middle and end and looking more specifically at identifying of words that indicated is a strong bias for analyzing how we feel after we read something. (Martin, p. 1, lines 22-30)

Martin's ideas imply that all media are constructions of determined points of views that reflect opinions, assumptions, and biases. Therefore it is necessary for students to engage in the media educational process, which includes critical reflection and creative action. Critical reflection is defined through critical thinking activities that involve decoding media messages, challenging dominant media discourse, and critically analyzing media's social implications and their effects. Creative action is defined through students' engagement into critical and creative writing and producing which involves learning various media production techniques, using media technologies for self-expression, and developing progressive ideas to create their own representations through creative media production.

Carl described Tele-media and media education in general as learning activities for students that present "different aspects of media, how media is used in their life, how it is used to sway public opinion, and different types of media that there are now" (p. 1, lines 21-23). He emphasizes youth exposure to the saturation of media and their overpowering influence. He talked about gaming media as an example. "There are so many, you can look at gaming media, which is so popular now, and how some media are kind of getting overpowering as you would say" (p. 1, lines 23-24). Carl elaborated on the overwhelming effects and causations of gaming, which he sees as a matter of much concern with respect to students:

Especially in the atmosphere that we have at school, I think it is a little more persuasive than it would be because the parental control is a little less and I don't know whether it's economically driven or whether parents don't feel they have enough influence over their children. Maybe it's the grade 8s but it's really getting to be really influential. (Carl, p. 1, lines 26-29)

Carl also talked about the importance of engaging students in discussions about local newscasts and how the media operation works as part of the Tele-media unit. His emphasis on teaching how media operate suggests that teaching the technical aspects of media broadens students' knowledge and encourages them to engage in the creative process of media production. "So, hopefully it's kind of expanding their, you know, horizons and viewpoints and opinions that they're going to have about media in general and not so one-sided ..." (p. 1, lines 37-39).

Helen explained the Tele-media unit activities mainly take place in the Saskatoon Public Schools Division's media studios located in downtown Saskatoon.

I say its opportunity for students to go down and use studios, and that along with that there's a prepared unit of lessons that lead up to the production day. It's really the basics of Tele-media because beyond that it's what you decide to do with it. So even in terms of critical thinking or analysis it's really not inherent in Tele-media; the Tele-media process itself is really just "here is how you plan commercial, here's how you plan interviews, here's how you film them, and here's the editing process". That's really the Tele-media unit; and then each teacher decides what to add to that. (Helen, p. 1, lines 35-41)

When she was asked how many production sessions are included in the Tele-media unit, Helen stated that they use the facilities at the Public Schools Divisions' media production studio for only one day. She expressed her opinion about how important it is to spend more time with

students, in the studio teaching them the nuts and bolts of media production and how students are more engaged and learn better when they are able to use the studios for a second day.

... when I was able to take a group twice the second time was always so much better.

Because trying to explain to them the capabilities, let's say, of the green screen studio and what they can do there... No matter how much you try to explain it to them and- no matter how much you showed them examples, it's always that after they go for a day they say, "oh, now I know what we would do differently." (Helen, p. 2, lines 49-53)

Helen believes that there is not enough time for students to develop skills necessary to produce media creatively. She stressed the need for more sessions and a more in depth study of critical media education in elementary classrooms. She also talked about the challenges teachers have in getting all students engaged in editing that they do in the classroom for a few days after a session or two in the studios.

Well, it depends on how you do it. So I've usually had that all students have to have turn with editing. But that's editing one scene, it's not really the whole process and you always get a few who just really engage in that and sort of take the leadership and do the vast majority of it. (Helen, p. 2, lines 67-69)

In response to the question of how well students learn about the idea of editing, the concept of continuity, script and the whole production; Helen explains:

... you know, not only we're limited in terms of we get one day in the studio, but then we get that editor for five days ... so trying to get everybody through, it's always this incredibly hectic, frantic trying to get them edited. So that doesn't lend itself very well to actual careful thought. It's actually why over the years ... I really changed how much prep I've done with Tele-media because, in terms of when I look at some of these



questions in terms of critical thinking and the engaging them, they don't- when we focus too much on the product... it becomes sort of like at how much time has gone into this just focusing on product, and the product ends up, often, not being very good, right? It ends up being sort of a silly thing because the kids just get so excited about filming and being funny and the editing and- so it often doesn't really reflect a lot of critical thinking. Even if you do a lot beforehand in terms of advertising and manipulation, and they get into the studio and they just want to have fun. (Helen, p. 2, lines 77-90)

When Helen was expressing her views about Tele-media and students' active participation, she agreed that the process of learning needs to be fun but she believes it's not so in depth that they don't get into critical thinking and creative engagement. In a sense, Helen implied that Tele-media does not provide efficient time and resources for student to help them to develop critical thinking and creative expression necessary to critically reflect, understand, and analyze the underlying meanings of media messages presented to them.

It's sort of like if I were to compare it to when we use math manipulative in a math class. The first time we use them, if the kids haven't seen them before, we usually have a class where they just kind of played with them ... Its sort of a fun play class. "Here's some fun math manipulative. Look at all the fun things you can do with them". And in the next class we start applying them because when they get new toys, they just want to play. So the first time they're in the Tele-media studio it's just fun they just want to play. They don't really think about anything else because they've never been there. It's new to them and it is a lot of fun. So when you can only go once it's hard to move past that, whereas let's say you were there for a couple of days. In the first day, it would be that and then

after that, it would be another thing - after that then I think they would get down to actual work. (Helen, p. 2, lines 95-104)

Helen explained how Tele-media is an important unit because potentially, the more teachers and students and perhaps parents involve in it, the better it becomes “even though it has its limitations” (p. 4, lines 178-179).

Henry considered media education as a process that is being practiced in the elementary classrooms beyond the Tele-media unit based on the different degrees of teachers’ media competencies and access to media and technology tools for teaching and learning. Henry also mentioned the importance of the use of You Tube and clips from TV news by teachers in the classrooms.

Well, I would say we’ve evolved. Teachers are taking a lot more digital pictures. They bring their own cameras and they’ll incorporate it in their language arts or science. I’ve seen it done a little bit in math. So yeah, they are using media to teach the other concept so it is becoming intertwined in their curriculum delivery. (Henry, p. 1, lines 16-19)

Don is a teacher with a particular interest in integration of technology into education as a means to creativity and deeper thinking. He believes that teachers have a significant role to play in raising the next generation and that teaching is an extension of parenting (p. 1, lines 12-17).

Don highlights the importance of elementary teachers in helping children to develop abilities and flexibilities in their approaches for learning. An elementary teacher, in a sense, becomes another parent for a child who spends a productive period of weekdays in the elementary school to learn and develop meta-cognitive abilities. Meta-cognitive development enables children in elementary schools to become aware of their knowing and the learning process. In the learning process, they develop the abilities to reflect critically in order to analyze, interpret, evaluate, and

understand all kinds of messages and their meanings (reading) as well as the abilities to create their own dialogues and messages in the form of productions (writing) in variety of contexts.

Don expressed his opinion about media literacy in the following way:

I would call it media that is incorporated in a wide basis of form. So I think that we're talking about computer literacy, we're talking about visual literacy in a sense, in same way that Gardner talked about multiple intelligences in a way that we can be smart in different fashions. (Don, p. 2, 46-49)

Don believes that allowing students to express themselves freely using a variety of media enhances their learning.

So Tele-media to me means understanding and transmission of information, storage of information, the mix of information in many different ways and there're lots of people that recognize that even the non-geek knows they have to have some way of allowing students represent their understanding or to teach them and we know that if we mix the media, students retain better and learn better. (Don, p. 2, lines 57-61)

Don explains that Tele-media as a unit is not a required activity in elementary classrooms but many teachers choose to teach it as an option for Practical and Applied Art (PAA) curriculum.

Tele-media as a program which is not a required by the way, it's not a required activity but I would say many teachers use it as a way to integrate, let's say, language art outcomes and perhaps social studies outcomes but at the same time because we required to do 58 hours of PAA in grade seven, it fits well with that because it's explicit instruction. (p. 4. Lines 164-168)

Don's statement about teaching Tele-media as part of PAA is a great idea to use the resources, if available in schools, as a way to integrate critical media literacy in a variety of subjects.

#### 4.3.2 Agency of Change

Teachers' expressions on the idea of *agency of change*, generally, imply the notion of advocacy and promotion of stewardship towards positive change. Teachers agreed that developing critical thinking and creative engagement through media educational practices enhances students' cross-curricular competencies. These competencies enable them to become more aware of their potential as responsible citizens and advocates of positive change at different levels and capacities. This awareness, in a sense, stimulates some kind of social impulse to form a circle of influence, which in turn, potentially, expands through calibrating the expressive impulse and using the power of networking from school, home, and community.

Teachers' notions of collaboration among both students and teachers highlights the idea that in an ideal sense, collaboration stimulates learning while teaching participants to challenge the status quo and take action for positive change. Teachers emphasized the significant role played by elementary teachers in nurturing students' media competencies towards self-awareness and positive change. Teachers' role as mentors that promote positive change for their students' awareness and proactivity, places them in a critical position as change agents who create the circle of influence that magnify and amplify the positive impact of change and extends the notion of acting towards positive change among their students.

Teachers' perceptions about students' proactive participation in critical media educational practices imply that although challenging, encouraging students to get into critical thinking and creative engagement paves the way for a dynamic learning environment. In such an

environment, students create meaningful and positive contents using audio and visual expressions as effective ways of communication that convey powerful messages in a variety of contexts and formats. Students' media representations resonate with self and community towards positive change.

Teachers, generally, agreed that elementary students in different grades have different capacities for critical thinking and creative expressions necessary for becoming agents of change. Teachers expressed that students in upper grade are more conscious critical thinkers than those in the primary grades, thus they develop more of self-awareness and abilities to make informed decisions as well as to conceive creative expressions and become change agents. In their opinions, teachers imply the idea of implementation of media educational activities into subjects such as Social Studies and English Language Art as an effective strategy to help students to develop critical thinking and creative expressions in their way to become agents of positive change.

Kathy expressed her opinion on the importance of students' critical thinking in the classroom through debates and discussions on a variety of issues presented by media. She indicated that "the more critically kids look at things the more debate and discussion comes within their social circle on issues" (p. 1, lines 38-39). Kathy's expression of "social circle" implies that students who actively engage in practicing critical thinking through debates and discussions, form social impulse or, in other words, circles of influence, which is an important process for students to become agents of change.

So agents of change would be kids who not only are being able to sift through a lot of information and come up with what is truth. It's being able to challenge their peers,

challenge the things that they're staying around them, you know, to help persuade, I suppose, and to change opinion. (Kathy, p. 2, lines 64-67)

Kathy stressed the idea of teachers' collaborative work for providing an authentic learning environment that helps students to develop critical thinking and social consciousness, and to become creative producers and change agents. Kathy highlighted the teachers' role in an authentic teaching and learning environment that implies their significant impact on children to understand and participate in interdependent relationships that allow students to develop circles of influence and become agents of change by actively engaging in critical reflection and creative expression in their community of peers, friends and families.

Well, one thing I think is important is that, teachers who find effective methods of teaching media literacy help other teachers and teachers need to promote that with other teachers. Because to me that is the most effective way to get me inspired to change is by my colleague saying this really worked, here's how I did it, try it. I have great respect for my colleagues and when that happens there's a good chance that I'm going to improve my practices well. And then that, then, will reflect on students learning subject to have them be creative agents of change. Well, social consciousness; when I think of how to help children be creative agents it almost always comes down to some kind of a social issue that we deal with. And, so the social issue maybe the information we're seeking, but the critical element that is what they do with that information and the opinions they form as a result. (Kathy, p. 6, lines 241-250)

Ted talked about the importance of encouraging students to be critical thinkers through questioning, debates, and discussions in the class, which in turn, influence people around them to

think critically and question everything. The influential result will lead students to be agents of change (Ted, p. 6, lines 267-271).

Martin expressed his opinions about the impact of critical media educational practices on students that motivate them to be critical thinkers, responsible citizens, and active participants for change.

The role of critical media educational practices in terms of developing agency I think in the classroom the way that I've seen it is in terms of understanding that these things are constructions. They do have purposes and they do affect how the kids act and how they behave and how they desire things and how they want things and how they understand things. So I think the role of critical media educational practices is showing that the students are not simply just passive observers receiving the stuff passively, they're engaged in these different processes that affect how they behave and what they do and I think that when they're able to identify sort of at a meta-cognitive level that this is what this article is doing and this is the behaviour that's trying to elicit from me that they can begin gaining agency and they can act in a way that is more independent whether not I guess what I mean by that is that they're not so easily persuaded by the these media sources -- they're able to act in accordance with their own beliefs despite what some of these other sources might be trying to persuade them into or against what these media practices are trying to elicit from them. (Martin, pp. 1-2, lines 45-53)

Carl explained how important it is to get his students involved in critical thinking, encouraging them to create meaningful and positive contents and conveying progressive messages in a variety of media formats to influence community and become change agents in society.

We talk about how can you improve your society, how can you improve the world through different things and different ways that we can make a difference. And I think we bring that into the classroom where we're always looking about how community is reacting to something and how you can kind of influence that community as far as change, and look at different aspects of how you can promote that as far as using Internet, as far as using posters, as far as using videos, and as far as using a newsletter for your classroom. (Carl, p. 2, lines 85-90)

In Carl's opinion, elementary students in middle grades become more conscious critical thinkers than younger children in primary grades. Carl's ideas on the notion of creative agency in the classroom imply that older students in elementary classrooms are more informed decision-makers; develop more ability and sense of freedom to conceive their own opinions and express themselves to make a difference in their circles of influence.

I think we can see them in the older grades like 6, 7, and 8. In the younger grades, they take things as you tell them. Once they get in grades 6, 7, and 8, they start to develop their own ideas about what is right and wrong, what should we be doing in this situation and they really feel that they do want to express themselves with a lot of these opinions ... (Carl, p. 7, lines 278-290)

Helen expressed her thought on the idea of critical and creative agency, with a critical eye on curriculum outcome and indicators, in the following way:

I thought about this a lot because- especially working with gifted students because they tend to go there more easily ... And part of the challenges with our new curriculum, we're so focused on these new outcomes that I'm thinking this is going to be lost a little bit. Because there's no outcome that really connects, you know, that really specifically



tells teachers they need to make sure students are literate in media and what that really means. And not- you know, so its not just understanding how to make a PowerPoint, that's not being literate consumers ... when we look at our indicators in the curriculum there's nothing specific that says "they need to be able to understand media manipulation and become critical viewers of media". And I think as people focus on trying to understand the new curriculum, I just think there's going to be a bit of a gap where we're so fixated on new outcomes and figuring out how that works, I could see people, kind of, ignoring it because they have an assumption that these kids are growing up so computer literate and media literate but there's nothing we need to do and I heard that a lot, but when you work with them then you see, yeah they've grown up with computers. They don't even know how to save files properly or they don't even understand how the messages advertising is really giving them or they don't even see how product placement, which is so new in terms of our experience, but they're so used to it they don't even see that as advertising ... So in terms of that piece of Tele-media, which is the commercial part, they don't even recognize the level of manipulation, the level of planning that goes in to advertising and it's such a key thing in terms of being a critical thinker in our society. (Helen, p. 3-4, lines 135-151)

Helen emphasized the urgency of resolving the gaps in teaching critical media literacy. Her concerns highlight the importance to realize the depth and complexity of critical media education and the vital necessity of identifying the resources and developing a practical framework for integration of media literacy education across curriculum. Helen posed some questions that emphasize the importance of active engagement of students in critical thinking and creative producing of media.

How do you really engage them in a meaningful way? So, not just engage in a fun activity, that's pretty easy to do but how do you get them to go from that fun activity to really engage in it in a critical way of thinking? (Helen, p. 8, lines 334-336)

Henry contemplated on the idea of critical and creative agency in elementary classroom and shared his students' experiences with media production that conveyed effective educational messages.

I think more than ever students can develop their end product... the quality of the end project is much higher because the... and part of that is technology and also the understanding of how media works. For example, a group of students made an anti-smoking commercial and they did it with fewer words but they did it in black and white format -- they used the music that was appropriate. They used slogans that were short and appropriate and it was an extremely effective commercial. So at some level students understand the elements of the media really well and how it creates an emotion, and it creates the message they want in fewer words than if they were writing it out. So they're showing critical thinking. It takes a long time and when you view the commercial, you're affected and the message stays with you but it's not like they created a lot of text or a lot of... the content is visual and it's moving and quite frankly it's their view of world that they've taken some of the ideas and they've applied it to, you know, whether it's a Language Arts assignment or whatever. (Henry, p.1, lines 31-42)

Henry emphasizes students' tremendous effort in using visual expressions as an effective way of communication. On the other hand, he finds it a challenge with education's conventional expectations.

I think that's a challenge because the other part of education wants to have students become great writers. Media tends to have the one most effective slogan or sentence versus the lead up. And the lead up text is now been replaced almost by setting a mood or setting that has been replaced by music or the imagery. So it's an interesting way that students are moving towards learning and creating. (Henry, p. 2, lines 46-50)

In Don's opinion, "media education or using media in education enhances learning" (p. 4, lines 144-145). Don expressed critical and creative agency in elementary classroom as mainly "based on the student's ability to learn" (p. 4, line 150). Students reflect the learning outcome in their continuous learning process in variety of ways. "In life, to teenage boys, it might be how to treat a girl properly" (Don, p. 3, line 129). Don believes that students in higher elementary grades, compared to primary grades, are more receptive to develop concrete opinions, engage in conceptual dialogues, exert influence on others, and become change agents.

Don spoke about his experience of dealing with ways of effectiveness of media educational practices for developing critical and creative agents of change in elementary classrooms. He stated,

I don't know about primary level in media but once they get in the middle years, certainly in grades 7 and 8, they have their own ideas. They have enough stored that they can start to express themselves. Let me give you a small example. For the last 2 or 3 years before I moved here, I was teaching three sections of social studies all the same grade. It was wonderful. It was great for the kids and was great for me because I could prepare better quality materials because I had more time. Because I was creating once, something once that I could use for three times. So instead of needing to creating three discrete things and dividing up that time -- you see the math in it? I created a wiki project where their

partners were in the other classrooms and they didn't work together at the same time. What they had to do was that they had to create a biographical essay of sorts on an important character that exercises power. The theme of the unit was power, the nature of power, the application of power, the effects of power in society. So I had them do it as a biography of sorts but they did it separately. It is a research essay but I added the component that they had to critically analyze with their partners had done asynchronously. So they were looking at it and going "oh, that's what he did". And they would cross it out and edit it and then add and take away the ideas that they had to do some analysis on their neighbours, so it was a partner activity that I feel a lot and think more critically than just coming up with the information which they had to come up with the appropriate components in order to satisfy the outcome but part of that was improving on their neighbours work by looking at it and saying this is good, this is not so good, let's make it better. And I feel for the most part it was a more effective activity, using technology of course, that could be accessed from anywhere. Another plus, they didn't have to be in the same room. So one could work on it at 6 at night and the other at 8 at night when the time allowed. I think that's an effective use of technology and it does have a critical component of element and that's why I think when we talk about developing critical and creative agents, it comes down to how do we structure the learning process in part and that has less to do with the outcome itself but how you reach the outcome. (Don, p. 14, lines 605-630)

Don's statement implies that incorporating media and technology for students' learning progress in a variety of subjects can be very effective. Implementing media educational activities in subjects such as Social Studies and English Language Art can help students to

develop critical thinking and creativity through collaborative work with their fellow classmates while maintaining their own individual means of expressions. Don's emphasis on moving forward towards reaching curricular outcomes highlights the important role a well-planned learning process can play in guiding students in a positive direction to practice their critical reflection and creative expression.

#### 4.3.3 Engagement and supports in media education

In response to the theme of engagement and supports, most teachers agreed on the importance of understanding the inquiry-based learning nature of media educational practices which requires active engagement of learners, resourceful and engaging teachers, caring and encouraging parents, hands-on teaching and learning resources, and extensive technical, conceptual, and financial supports are vitally important to academic advancement of children in elementary school classrooms. Also their opinions on educational involvement of community and professional educators and media industry imply the importance of collaboration with community services and community leaders such as health services, social services, cultural organizations, police departments, or politicians. Ongoing collaborative engagement and supports are the key elements of successful and sustainable learning outcomes.

Teachers expressed their perceptions about ways of increasing the level of engagement, not only for teachers and students, but also for parents in media educational practices across curriculum. When asked if parents are involved in discussions about media literacy with their children at home, most teachers agreed that parents, depending on their availability and lifestyle, also play an active role in shaping children's relationship to emerging media and technologies. Teachers' opinions imply the benefits of parents' involvement by understanding their children's

learning capabilities and reinforcing their development and competencies to explore their self-identities, creatively express themselves, and make connections with their peers.

Most teachers agree that the potentials and values of critical media education are not being fully realized in elementary schools yet and there is limited access to Internet and media technology in general but some modes of media education are still being practiced in some classrooms such as Social Studies, English language Arts, as well as Science and Health. They thought that ongoing media educational practices are happening explicitly and implicitly in different capacities in schools, at homes, and in communities in everyday lives of children. For teachers and students both, the level of engagement and learning in media educational practices is greatly reduced due to the lack of easy access to reliable equipment and resources.

Some teachers consider media technology as an extension of the educational environment. This notion implies that providing an authentic learning and teaching environment facilitates easy access to reliable technology for media educational practices with an increased level of engagement in inquiry-based learning classrooms. With such a dynamic learning environment, teachers highlighted the great potential of students to develop critical thinking and creative expressions. Children in elementary schools can potentially engage in media educational practices across curriculum through questioning and critically reflecting on the underlying meanings of the messages and representations of media. In this process, they develop their abilities of thinking and identifying their informed choices for making decisions in everyday life.

Most teachers saw it as a challenge to facilitate media educational practices for students with different technical and conceptual levels of understanding of media literacy. They mentioned the challenge of trying to keep up with their media and technology savvy students

who have easy access to a variety of media technology devices. Teachers also expressed their thoughts about the types of supports they get to some extent from their fellow teachers, the Public School board, and community. Teachers agree that they need to upgrade their knowledge of critical media literacy, technically and conceptually, by participating in professional development sessions facilitated by the Public School Board. Many elementary teachers have realized that media education needs extensive sustained supports. Potentially, any means of support can be offered by the Ministry of Education, media industry, colleges of education, communities, and any formations of networks and associations that promote the exchange of good practice and the development of critical media literacy education. These sustained supports facilitate access to appropriate and updated media production and post-production technology, having explicit instructions on media educational training in teacher education program, having training to update their knowledge of media technology and instructional design through professional development offered by the Public School Board, and ongoing update of teaching and learning resources and an electronic portfolio produced and compiled by teachers.

Kathy believes that parents have a great role to play in encouraging their children to actively engage in media educational practices.

I think parents have a big role in what their children are exposed to, right? And then talking with their children I mean, we're just extension of the home I believe. Talking with their children about what they're seeing. I think parents have a great influence. Kids have huge influence on each other; "Could you take a look at this or this?" And it's happening so quickly so there's so much information and how do they filter through? Well, very often it's their peers, you know? (Kathy, p. 3, lines 105-110)

Kathy also talked about the kinds of supports they get from their fellow teachers and from the Public School Boards offering technical supports and professional developments. She expressed her continuous challenge trying to upgrade her technical skills in order to cope with media savvy students.

I have to become much more media savvy. It's much different; it's a much different format than it used to be as far as giving information to the public and so my technology ability has to improve. Students are always way ahead of me insofar as using technology. You know, so that's something that teachers always have to be doing, is to keep upgrading their own understanding and abilities in technology. (Kathy, p. 3, lines 127-131)

Ted expressed his opinion about media educational practices that are ongoing in a variety of subjects in school and at home.

Well, they're happening in the classroom and they are happening on an ongoing basis as I said earlier its not something just happens in the month of January because that's Tele-media. It's ongoing. It starts the end of the year but also happens at home to the students who are having lots of these discussions on their own. (Ted, p. 3, lines 119-122)

Ted responded to the question about parents' involvement in a positive manner and stressed students' desire to discuss critical media literacy related issues with their family members and their peers.

Yes, their parents, brothers, and I think even amongst themselves to a certain extent too. They love to discuss... at this age, maybe it's not just this age, but these students-- they just absolutely love discussing these kind of issues. (Ted, p. 3, lines 126-128)



Ted also talked enthusiastically about the engagement of parents, teachers, and students in media educational activities and how students take active roles in them.

Yeah, parents and teachers are involved with students. The students take an active role and I do not have to layout specific criteria for them to do. I just ask them to follow these issues and they do and because that's easy- because they've taken an interest in it. So they enjoy it. They don't see it as homework- they just see it as something that is a part of their day. (Ted, p. 3, lines 132-135)

Ted commented on some technical supports provided by school such as electronic copies of newspapers, projectors in classrooms, audio-visual resources, and Internet access.

Well, again at the school here we have digital copies of the newspaper I believe it's 30 copies daily. Every student can have access to the newspaper- we have projector in every classroom- a digital projector so we want to share news stories. We can go on to the Internet and project that. It is not necessarily a newspaper article, it could be a video from CBC.ca- it could be something we've seen or heard about from YouTube- lots of different things- so those are the supports. (Ted, p. 4, 139-143)

Ted, like other teachers, agrees that there is limited access to Internet and media technology in general but he believes that media education, although limited, is being practiced in many classrooms. Martin talked about active engagements of teachers and students in media educational practices that mainly happen in the elementary school classrooms such as English Language Art and Social Studies.

I think in terms of subject and content certainly it is happening explicitly in the classroom, it is happening implicitly in the classroom, it's happening in the hallways, and it's happening in the discussions. So when I think of media educational practices, I guess

I immediately focus on explicit practices where the media that we're using is being discussed specifically and not just the messages coming through the media. So I think where it tends to happen more for me in terms of where we're discussing the actual media and either criticizing or analyzing it, trying to see those patterns that I was talking about before, tend to occur explicitly in language arts and social studies where using the most. (Martin, p. 2, lines 60-67)

Martin also mentioned other opportunities for students to engage in media activities for classes such as science and health. "Also, I think there are opportunities for them to happen in places like science, especially when we're comparing and contrasting traditional scientific approaches to First Nations approaches" (Martin, p. 2, lines 67-69). He emphasized the importance of understanding "where the different pieces of information and through what media those are both coming from and what impact those media types have and how we perceive those things in terms of media in more oral tradition" (Martin, p. 2, lines 70-73). Martin concludes his thoughts on this issue in the following way: "And we tend not to analyze that in science class but I think that's a place where it could happen although where it's happening for the most part is in English Language Arts and in Social Studies and also Health" (Martin, p. 2, lines 73-76). Martin shared his experience on teaching a health program where he incorporated media education: "We were looking at messages about identity and the beauty and those things where we've looked at them critically" (Martin, p. 2, lines 78-79). In response to the question of who is engaging in these practices, Martin said:

I think certainly the students are and I am. Parents, we don't talk a lot about parents or what parents are telling their kids and it hasn't come up explicitly so we haven't sat down

and had a discussion about how media is treated in the students' homes. (Martin, p. 2, lines 80-82)

Martin commented on the challenges and the importance of the parents' involvement in media educational practices with their children. He highlighted the parents' role to encourage their children to be active participants of media educational practices.

A lot of times it feels like parents sort of come and expect us to handle everything here in the classroom and then they won't show their kids math unless we explicitly assigned, they won't read a book unless we explicitly assigned it and stuff like that and I think this is another one of those cases where I think parent should be talking to the kids about it explicitly -- about their thoughts on media and giving the kids skills as well that they could bring to the classroom and I think you see that some kids come in and they already are very critical of messages that are coming through the media and have a good understanding of that and I don't know if that's picked up just intuitively by the student or whether that's being taught by the parents. I don't know but some kids come in already with a really good critical understanding of it while other kids are completely clueless. (Martin, pp. 2-3, lines 86-95)

In terms of supports, Martin appreciates the kind of print-based teaching resources are available to them.

For example the program that we piloted last year had a great teachers book, I actually really enjoyed it, came with the media resources in order to look at critically and they were all prepared for us, they were good quality, they were current and the kids seem to enjoy them. So that was a good example. (Martin, p. 3, lines 101-105)

Carl's opinions on engagements in media educational practices implies that elementary classrooms, especially in grades 7 and 8, are great learning environments for children to engage in developing critical thinking through reading books, newspapers, and other sorts of print media, as well as viewing videos, movies, Internet, and other kinds of screen-based media. Carl expressed his thought on involving community members in school education to enhance learning and students' engagement. Carl's ideas about the involvement of community and professionals implies the importance of collaboration with community services and community leaders such as health services, social services, cultural organizations, police departments, politicians, etc.

Well, I'm sure the community is getting pretty involved now in lot more than it used to be. We have politicians coming into the school, we have police agencies coming in, we have nursing agencies coming in and promoting things, we have off-hand, depending on the school you're at, some schools have some parental people coming in. We have parents coming, professionals in architecture and writing and doing kind of- helpful kind of add-ins to the classroom. Actually the public is really, really getting involved in promoting. Its maybe promoting themselves also and agencies, which I'm sure is. But you know they're really starting to get a little bit more involved in education because children are, you know, adults of the future ... (Carl, p. 3, lines 113-121)

Other than financial support, Carl also talked about professional development for teachers and community supports. "... agencies like police forces ... regularly come in and have liaisons in the class - a lot of agencies from university will come in and offer classes or seminars for students as well as teachers" (Carl, p. 3, lines 128-130).

Helen thinks of media technology as an extension of the educational environment. Her opinions imply that the education system needs to provide an authentic learning and teaching

environment that incorporate easy access to reliable technology in inquiry-based learning classrooms. Critical media education, in her opinion, needs to be integrated in everyday classroom activities.

... we've never been in a situation where we have access to reliable technology, so- well, in terms of computers ... we technically have a class mini-dells, they never work. Kids can't log on, they can't access the Internet, and they can't access their drive so it's a question of access. So that's why I'm saying, I never gone past- you know, there's been a big push to look at them as part of environment. So just see them as a, sort of facilitating learning. And now we do have data projectors in the room, which is really- that is very helpful. But in terms of the things that kids can do, they are still just tools because we're not at a point yet where we have the access that would be necessary for it to be seamlessly integrated into their learning. It always has to be a special "we're going on the computer lab for this" day. (Helen, p. 4, lines 158-167)

Helen explained why the level of engagement and learning, for both teachers and students, in media educational practices greatly reduces due to the lack of easy access to reliable equipment and resources.

... even when you think about Tele-media, in a way it's strange that we need to do some of these things in a big studio because with the access, we should have two video cameras and editing software, they should be able to film the commercials at school, right? But we don't have access to editing software that would work; we don't have good access to video cameras and that sort of thing. So technology is still just a tool because we don't have- we don't have reliable access. (Helen, p. 4, lines 169-174)

Helen critically expressed her opinion about how media education is being undervalued compared to other subjects such as career education. The value of media education needs to be realized by our school system as a required subject that has a particular interdisciplinary quality for implementation and integration across curriculum.

So for example, you know, we have a curriculum now, we have to cover career education. So for some reason our province thinks career education is more important than media education, right? We don't have- we don't have a certain number of minutes a week we have to do on media education, but I'm supposed to do a class a week on career education. So that's an interesting- to me it's an interesting contrast that we're somehow telling kids they need to be thinking about jobs and careers in grade seven and eight. But, yeah, so really what they're saying is what the purpose of school is about getting a job, and we all know it's not the purpose of school. So I mean, in an ideal world we suppose to have a curriculum for media education that is a required thing you have to do. (Helen, p. 5, lines 218-226)

Henry expressed his experience of media education and the various levels of engagement by parents depending on their availability and lifestyle.

I think some families do, but I think it might be changing with the parents that are coming up that are more savvy with the media but there's also a portion of people that are busy and they maybe don't necessarily talk about good media and bad media. (Henry, p. 4, lines 145-147)

Henry responded to the question of who are active participants of media educational practices. He also pointed out the importance of identifying an audience and understanding the context.

For Tele-media unit, we usually do that as an individual project and the parents get to view the end product, and basically, when we talk to the students throughout developing the end product is to know what your audience is. Is your audience going to be parents, grandparents, and relatives? So they have to keep everything in that context which may limit some of the creative things that you do. (Henry, p. 4, lines 153-157)

Don spoke of the important role parents could play in education and how parents along with schools can help children to be responsible, caring, and creative individuals moving forward in a path to make a difference in their lives and the lives of others. "If we are responsible parents, we try to raise our children in a way they should go to become functioning and contributing adults that will have successful lives and it's very complex" (Don, p. 8, lines 278-280). Don's statement implies the great potential of students to develop critical thinking and creative expressions. Children in elementary schools can potentially engage in media educational practices across curriculum through questioning and critically reflecting on the underlying meanings of the messages and representations of media. In this process, they develop their abilities of critical thinking and identifying their informed choices for making decisions in everyday life.

I want the kids to think about what they're doing to understand why they're making the choices. Even today if you choose this tool, the one we're looking at; you have to decide why that's the right tool for you. If you're using something in black-and-white or you're putting a filter on this video or this photo, I say why you are doing that? Why are you using black-and-white instead of color? Why is it sepia? Why you doing that? Yes, it looks cool. It's like PowerPoint. You have things flying all over the place. Why you

doing that? You're making me dizzy. There needs to be a point and media education is the soft side of understanding how all fits together. (Don, p. 8, lines 318-325)

In Don's opinion, supports for media education have been provided to some extent. Don and many other elementary teachers have realized that media education needs extensive sustained supports. Potentially, any means of support can be offered by the Ministry of Education, media industry, colleges of education, communities, and any formations of networks and associations that promote the exchange of good practice and the development of critical media literacy education. These sustained supports facilitate access to appropriate and updated media production and post-production technology, having explicit instructions on media educational training in teacher education programs, having training to update their knowledge of media technology and instructional design through professional development offered by the Public School Board, and ongoing update of teaching and learning resources and electronic portfolio produced and compiled by teachers.

In terms of supports ... tools are increasingly available for us in order to be able to facilitate that. We have more computer access. We had lots of issues this year, at least in our building, the Internet and the like, but we have tools we can use including software, which allows our kids to explore their learning more efficiently. (Don, p. 8, lines 333-337)

#### 4.3.4 The Instructional processes in media education

On the idea of instructional processes in media education as a theme, teachers agreed there was an emerging need for developing a framework for the integration of media literacy education across the curriculum. They emphasized the idea of incorporating media education in teacher education programs available to elementary teacher candidates to gain necessary



knowledge and skills to keep up with the fast paced developing technology in order to offer better guidance to their students. Teachers' recommendations on offering media literacy courses for teacher candidates imply that integration of critical media literacy can begin in teacher education programs at the universities. Teachers, who graduate from such programs, will be resourceful mentors to set a strong foundation for sustainable media integration across curriculum in elementary schools.

Since elementary school teachers teach most of the subjects, they potentially develop particular abilities to create and deliver critical media literacy in the form of cross-curricular projects in their classrooms. Elementary teachers play a great role to encourage and empower their students to include critical media educational activities in a variety of subjects. Students with positive vision alongside with their open-minded teachers can be potential agents of positive change in the process of media and technology integration in elementary schools.

Teachers noted that most of the activities in elementary classrooms that require critical thinking and creative expression are still limited to print-based media such as newspaper articles that may be viewed in form of copy print, on Smart Board, or online. Teachers stressed, multiple times, the issue of accessibility and believed that with easy access to media technology resources, active engagement of students and teachers increases in media educational activities in a variety of subjects. Other than the issue of access, some teachers also stated their concerns about large class sizes and the lack of sufficient financial supports for media technology and resources that cause difficulties for both teachers and students to engage in an optimum teaching and learning process.

Many elementary school teachers feel challenged for inadequate training, time constraints, work overload, insufficient resources and supports. They believe that there is an

urgent need for adequate training and resources for elementary teachers as well as having media specialists to work with teachers to facilitate media educational practices. This urgent need implies the idea of increasing teachers' self-efficacy and reducing their stress and time constraints to provide positive media educational environment for students to experience an optimum learning process to enhance their critical thinking and creative expressions. Such an environment requires elementary school teachers to have adequate training in the teacher education programs and later in their years of teaching.

Some teachers expressed their concerns about different levels of media literacy competencies among students in classrooms as a major obstacle for instructional processes. On the other hand, some other teachers believed that collaboration among students is a positive strategy in the learning process.

Teachers' perspectives on using the Internet for teaching and learning imply that because there are not specific indicators and outcomes for using the Internet in the classrooms, depending on teachers' knowledge and resourcefulness, each teacher has a different approach to the use of the Internet for teaching and learning. The Internet provides a great potential for students to expand their cross-curricular competencies and enhance their abilities to be aware of their choices in order to make informed decisions.

Teaching about mass media requires a flexible and an explicit instructional framework that facilitates cross-curricular activities for children to learn about mass media in variety of subjects. Teachers' perceptions on instructional processes imply the idea that teachers' resourcefulness, flexibility, and open-mindedness play a great role in exploring different instructional methods in order to set an appropriate ground for each classroom where students have the opportunity to explore, learn, understand, analyze, and create meanings. In the learning

process, different methods of instruction offer a great flexibility for both teachers and students to explore a variety of ways of discovering and understanding media contents. This flexibility provides a practical learning environment for children to build the essential skills of inquiry through questioning, discussing, and debating in a variety of contexts in order to develop a deeper understanding about the role of media in our culture. The importance of teaching about mass media in the elementary classroom implies the significance of critical thinking and creative expressions in understanding the ethical and practical aspects of media across curriculum.

Generally, teachers' perceptions of instructional processes in media education imply that sharing ideas through questioning, discussions, and debates in the classroom alongside teachers' mentorship and guidance, opens up a new pathway for children to move forward and actively engage in critical media educational processes and explore the role and the effects of media in their culture. This pathway creates a dynamic space to calibrate and tune in for developing an authentic instructional mechanism that provides a better understanding of the processes of critical media education in terms of critical thinking and creative expression. Teachers highlighted the idea of creative expression and how important it is that teachers must have appropriate access to relevant technology, having professional development workshops that are relevant and practical in terms of easy access and having user-friendly technology for teaching, and media resources while learning more about ways of promoting creative expression in classrooms. Facilitating courses by the Teacher Education Programs at the universities and professional development sessions by the School Board, can equip elementary teachers to be competent and resourceful teachers in the field of media education in order to offer good quality instruction, both conceptually and technically, for their students in critical media educational practices in an era where technology is growing rapidly. Acknowledgement of the necessity of

keeping up with the fast paced media and technology implies the idea of recognizing the potential for elementary teachers to get into the stream of unlimited available possibilities and set out a visionary mandate for life long learning.

Kathy brought up the idea of classroom management, which to her is a very important subject to include in the teacher education program. Kathy also believes that teachers need to have class management skills to be most effective in teaching, especially in subjects that involve media education.

When I went through education there we never took a class on classroom management. I went through four years of education and we never learned, we never had ... class just on classroom management and so we all got out and struggled in our own way to find our way in that way. You know, teaching media... media and technology, literacy to teachers also emphasizes how important that is to teach to their students that. So that's what I mean, if you have a course in that... Yeah, this is important it's so important that we feel that's a need for teachers in the future. (Kathy, pp. 3-4, lines 136-143)

Kathy also stressed the importance of having media and technology training available to teacher candidates in teacher education programs. She believes that having courses in media and technology can help teachers to gain enough knowledge and skills to keep up with the fast pace developing technology in order to be better mentors to their students. She expressed her concerns on this matter in the following way:

I'm not sure how the College of Education would necessarily be part of it other than having their teachers train their student teachers. Coming into the school system without an understanding or lessons in that-- see that would be applicable-- that would be good practice for the kids to come in and try teaching lessons immediately. Because it's not

my strongest point, it's happening so quickly that I can't keep up with the rapid upgrading that I would need. (Kathy p. 4, lines 157-161)

Kathy's ideas of having more media literacy training for teachers is an important issue that implies the idea of implementing critical media literacy education in teacher education programs for elementary teacher candidates at the universities. Since elementary school teachers teach most of the subjects, they potentially develop particular abilities to create and deliver critical media literacy in cross-curricular activities in their classrooms.

In terms of obstacles and advantages, Kathy talked about technology access in the classroom. "If kids can have access when they need it we can use our technology much more frequently. So you know, it all has to do with accessibility for kids" (Kathy, p. 5, lines 201-202). She expressed more concerns about students' limited access to Internet for education sites.

... as far as teacher access to equipment it has improved. For students' access we still have problems where the time usage is not efficient. Kids waste time trying to login ... Not enough routers in the school. (Kathy, p. 5, lines 193-195)

Ted talked about what is being taught about mass media in the classroom. His ideas on teaching about mass media imply that children need to develop an understanding about the role of media in our culture and actively engaging in media educational practices in different subjects to build the essential skills of inquiry through questioning, discussions, and debates.

... its about not just consuming things like viewing and hearing things, it's about actively listening, actively viewing things and that's what we try to teach them to view things actively and listen to things actively and what that basically means is you're asking yourself questions as you see and hear things ... who is the intended audience? And what is this message that is being presented to me? Is this message a fact or an opinion? It's

very important that students are understanding and differentiating fact and opinion, you know, ask them again do they agree or disagree with the opinion is being presented and if you do or don't, what are your reasons? Why? Or why not? (Ted, p. 4-5, lines 179-186)

Ted also talked about his experience of teaching about critical thinking and creative expression in the classroom. Generally, Ted's and other teachers' perceptions of instructional processes in the media education imply that sharing ideas through questioning, discussions, and debates in classroom alongside teachers' mentorship and guidance, opens up a new pathway for children to move forward and actively engage in critical media educational processes and explore the role and the effects of media in their culture. This pathway creates a dynamic space to calibrate and tune in for developing an authentic instructional mechanism that provides a better understanding of the processes of critical media education in terms of critical thinking and creative expression.

It's a discussion of different issues that happens in class and it's not just happening in class, it's happening at home. This morning 10 minutes before recess, I said does anybody have anything to share with us, things you've read or heard in the news and it's not just somebody shares their story and then we move, although sometimes it happens, but it's also a chance to comment on that and they enjoy that process. It is much to do with hearing and learning about it where they can say what I think about that; here is my opinion of that. They were just asking some more questions, probing questions and again it is an ongoing thing that happens all the time. (Ted, p. 5, lines 195-202)

Ted pointed out the issues of students' access to Internet at both the school and home.

I like to remind students at the end of the day to follow the news tonight and we have a discussion tomorrow or whenever. Not every student has access to the Internet at home so they want to do an inquiry project based on something that we've learned in class and

we want them to be doing some of it on their own time. Although we have some time in school to do it, but there is not sufficient time. There is an obstacle that some students are having -- still we think is universal and it's a little frustrating how to get around to it. We have a lot of problems getting logging on our network with so many students at the same time. So we are asking them to do that at home oftentimes but some students that don't have access to the Internet at home -- that's the big thing. (Ted, p. 5, lines 206-216)

Ted expressed his opinions, in a positive manner, about the possibilities of extending media educational practices beyond the Tele-media unit (which only happens in the month of January for a few days). Teachers and students can incorporate them in other subjects and school events. This incorporation can be a practical way of gradually integrating media literacy in elementary school curricula. His ideas imply that teachers play a great role to encourage students to include media educational activities in many possible ways. Students with positive vision alongside with their open-minded teachers can be potential change agents in the process of media and technology integration in elementary schools.

If we learn about Tele-media in January, learning how to produce, how a video production is produced then maybe that's the kind of thing we can be doing in drama class -- it's not a necessarily news event or media event but the technical part of it they can do in a drama class. They can do it in the presentations. I know students in last year's farewell produced their own great farewell. They learned video production techniques they used for their farewell event. So it's a way of carrying on the things that we've learned and again it's just making sure that it's a daily part of conversations you're having in class. (Ted, p. 5, lines 221-227)

Martin's views on teaching and learning about mass media in elementary classrooms imply the significance of critical thinking and creative expressions in media educational activities in every subject. He also stressed the idea of creative expression that needs to be practiced and straightened.

... what is being taught about mass media in elementary schools, certainly the critical component ... is something that comes up quite a bit. ... but the creative expression, when I think about it, I, as a teacher, tend to ignore for quite a bit in terms of using it as a way to express ideas or thoughts or to connect it well with the assignments that we do and that's maybe some place where I, as a teacher, need to experiment with little bit.

(Martin, p. 3, lines 126-132)

Martin explained more of his thoughts about creative expression and how important it is that teachers must have the appropriate access to relevant technology and media resources while learning more about ways of promoting creative expression in the classrooms.

Unfortunately here in school, for example, I went to a great professional development thing earlier this fall about using and creating graphic novels -- I can't remember the name of the program but it's one that I went to workshop and it was about how the kids can create graphic novels online. The problem is that we don't have on any computers to use with it and we have no way to instruct it. You know it's a program and I was excited to use it but I don't have the opportunity to do it but to be honest with you other than PowerPoint presentations that the only real piece that I know how to do so I'm feeling a little bit deficient in what my options are because I frankly don't know it. (Martin, p. 3-4, lines 134-141)



Martin mentioned the importance of having professional development workshops that are relevant and practical for our teaching.

I enjoy going to them. I think they are interesting to pull off. I think in some cases -- this is my honest opinion -- is that let's say a two day workshop seems in some senses too short because we really don't get to know the programs that we'll just get to experiment on our own. On the other hand some seem too long the sense that we go into details that just seem irrelevant about them so we learn how to use them basically but there is a lot of filler in there as well so it's kind of a double-edged sword where you want to go to learn about it but you leave not necessarily feeling like you learned enough and you also feel like a lot of the time that was wasted so that's my experience with the workshops. I was really happy to hear about that this is program that I was just mentioning this past spring and unfortunately I just can't apply it or can't use it. (Martin, p. 4, lines 146-155)

Martin expressed his hope that universities implement courses like critical media education courses in their teacher education programs for teacher candidates. Having media literacy courses at the university, Martin notes, "is a good idea and I think it's important, and I think in an ideal situation, it would be a huge part of what's going" (p. 4, lines 160-161).

Martin's opinion on offering media literacy courses for teacher candidates implies that the integrating of critical media literacy can begin in teacher education programs at the universities. Teachers, who graduate from such programs, will be resourceful mentors to set a strong foundation for sustainable media integration across curriculum in elementary schools.

I think that the courses in the University are certainly relevant for teachers and would be a big part of that they have to fit with what teachers are actually able to do in the classroom in terms of applying those things. (Martin, p. 4, lines 167-170)

Martin finds different levels of media literacy competencies among students in the classroom as a major obstacle for instructional processes and students' engagement in media education.

I think one of the obstacles with any kind of media is we have some kids who just know quite a bit more and others who were just completely clueless so anytime you're going to have to assume you're starting from scratch and kids will get impatient and move on. I think that's the obstacles because students are in such different levels when it comes to technology and computers. (Martin, p. 4, lines 174-178)

While Martin considers different levels of competencies as an obstacle, other teachers may find it as an advantage because collaboration among children has a potential for development of interdependent relationship in each participant. Martin also expressed his opinion about the advantages of different methods of instruction that offer great flexibility for both teachers and students to explore a variety of ways of discovering and understanding media contents in the process of learning.

I think the advantages is that they tend to get really engaged and in the novelty and in the new things that they're able to do and... you know what I like about some of these media things is that they're not fifty minute lessons, that they're there ongoing. There are a lot of discoveries that happen with them and there are changes that are made and so you know what I think done well and done patiently and a lot of these things come out. There are a lot of different things and learn from them from the actual process of learning how to use the program, the critical component of it, problem-solving, artistic component, and different ways that they can do different things and then they take that back and it adds to their kind of arsenal of critical media literacy as well because then they're understanding

what and how other authors of media and pop culture are setting it up for them. So I think that's one of the advantages of it. (Martin, p. 4, lines 180-189)

Carl explained his opinion on using the Internet in the classroom for teaching about mass media. His perspectives imply that because there are not specific indicators and outcomes for using the Internet in the classrooms, depending on teachers' knowledge and resourcefulness, each teacher has a different approach to the use of the Internet for teaching and learning. Carl along with other teachers believes that the Internet provides a great potential for students to expand their cross-curricular competencies and enhance their abilities to be aware of their choices in order to make informed decisions.

There is a big push for students to expand, to use different things. This is how you do it. How we are going to do now especially in media and critical thinking is giving kind of a larger question or some larger questions to look at and telling you about the answer whatever the answer might be and how can we get to that and seeing that. There is more than one way to arrive at this answer and kind of pulling in different expressions instead of just kind of saying okay this is what we want and this how you do it. Like what you want to do is having the kids to have an idea and say "hey this is how I would approach that idea" - and same way - "hey this is a good way to do". There is more than one way to definitely facilitating that information and helping them to make informed decisions. (Carl, p. 4, lines 160-168)

Carl confirmed the importance of instructional processes in media educational practices. His opinion on instructional processes of media education implies the idea that teachers' resourcefulness, flexibility, and open-mindedness play a great role in exploring different

instructional methods in order to set an appropriate ground for each classroom where students have the opportunity to explore, learn, identify, analyze, and create meanings.

Carl expressed his concerns about classrooms' inadequate access to media and technology. He pointed out two other factors as obstacles, financial support and large class sizes that cause difficulties for both teachers and students to engage in an optimum teaching and learning process.

I would say economics is one big thing. When you're talking about media especially, it's a fairly expensive process to work with because you are talking about media. You need overhead, projectors, you need the computers, the laptops, and you have to have the technology and the finances in the school to kind of put those things in place. So I think the biggest thing is economics as far as an obstacle. Another one is class sizes. The size of the classrooms is a big factor. How far you can take something like that because taking a class of 32 people to downtown to the Tele-media studio is a big challenge. This is just restrains on class sizes and ability to access those things. (Carl, pp. 4-5, lines 179-186)

Carl stressed the importance of facilitating professional development sessions offered by the Public School Board. He believes that these sessions equip teachers to be competent and resourceful teachers in the field of media education in order to offer good quality instructions, both conceptually and technically, in critical media educational practices in the elementary classrooms in an era where technology is growing rapidly.

“Education of teachers and providing professional development for teachers are so essential for strengthening media education in schools” (Carl, p. 5, lines 189-190). Carl's ideas on teachers' role in media educational practices imply the idea that teachers, in a sense, need to

use all available resources including professional development to strengthen their resourcefulness, both, conceptually and technically in an era that technology is growing rapidly.

I think professional development provide teachers how to upgrade their knowledge in the area of technology so they can facilitate better learning environment for students and help them to widen their horizons and benefit from seeing and realizing new possibilities in their journey. (Carl, p. 5, lines 200-203)

Carl's acknowledgement of the necessity of keeping up with the fast paced development of new media and technologies, implies the idea of recognizing the potential for elementary teachers to get into the stream of unlimited available possibilities and set out a visionary mandate for life long learning.

Technology is growing so fast. If you look at 10 years ago from where technology is -- memory capacity of what you can do videos and media -- if you compare with 10 years ago to what it is now and where it's going as far as technology and advancements in technology, sky is the limit. As far as possibilities, the teacher is willing to put the time in to learn those extra things. With the way things are going now with professional development in elementary systems, they're really pushing hard for lifelong learning ... (Carl, p. 5, lines 208-213)

Helen talked about critical thinking and creative expression as part of inquiry-based learning across curriculum. She emphasized that most of the activities in elementary classrooms that require critical thinking and creative expression are still limited to print-based media.

I know in some of the lower grades they'll get newspapers and that sort of thing. I think they just look at print medium. What you seem to hear a lot of talk about in terms of critical thinking and creative expression is all related to literacy and a narrower definition

of literacy where we're just looking at, you know, reading comprehension really, because our push in our division has been literacy around books and print. So people talk a lot about critical thinking and creative expression in terms of writing, creative writing, thinking critically about what you read in books, analyzing stories. (Helen, p. 6, lines 236-242)

Henry confirmed that newspaper articles and news are the main sources for teaching about mass media and practicing critical thinking in elementary classrooms. They may use the print copy, view it on Smart Board, or online.

There are classrooms that would use the Star Phoenix newspaper and it varies -- some years they might to break down the whole paper and parts of a paper or parts of a study. Or sometimes teachers will photocopy the articles from a newspaper and if you can find the same article online you can put it up on a Smart Board and analyze it or you can get to the students on their Net books and they can analyze it, read it, and discuss it. And even by definition of the mass media has changed because I would say staff members get their information from so many different sources. (Henry, p. 4, lines 177-183)

In response to the question about the possibilities and limitations of the process of media literacy integration in curricula, Henry expressed his concern about students' difficulties to log on and access online information on the Internet. This is a great challenge for students, which is discouraging and reduces the level of students' excitement for learning and active engagement.

Well, the biggest challenge we have at our school is probably the technology. We have close to seventy-five net-book computers and we have varying success logging on so what happens is and it's almost a point where we will see how it evolves because when twenty-five of thirty students can log on, the other five are waiting to be able to log on

and use it. That's a significant challenge. [...] We have people who are jumping on and they prepare these units at home, and then they have this wonderful presentation and the kids can't get logged on. So then, if you do that enough times to those people they'll just say "this is not worth it, I'm better off to go- to just get on my computer and then show it to the kids" which greatly reduces the engagement. (Henry, p. 5, lines 188-203)

Henry also expressed his enthusiasm about future possibilities of using many pieces of media and technology by students in elementary classrooms. "I predict a future where or a possibility where kids come and use other devices to get their information from tablets, iPad, cell phones, and smart phones" (Henry, p. 5, lines 207-208). He also talked about the idea of teaching the ethics of using any "piece of technology at the right time" (p. 5, line 215). Henry believes, there is a strong possibility that it could happen in the future.

Don pointed out that there is not a great deal of explicit instructions for teaching about mass media in elementary classrooms. He stated, "there is not a lot in the curriculum that talks about mass media. We do talk about and we do use some of it and we employ it whether that is showing a video or using Google Earth" (Don, p. 8, lines 355-357). Don also spoke about students in different grades that have different levels of ability to perceive media literacy in terms of critical thinking and creative expression.

... 9 or 10 years of age is kind of the beginning of when you should be out of the pure familiarity. They don't have the ability to meta-cognate to great degree yet. Even these guys at 13- most of these guys are 13 or 14, you know, it works for them- for some of them at least to think that way. So what is being taught? Not a great deal. The Tele-media program at grade 7 is the most major opportunity that we have and that is just in our division that I'm aware of to do that because you talk about advertising and the nature

of persuasive writing and the idea about selling you something ... (Don, p. 8, lines 361-368)

Don shared his experience of teaching in grades seven and eight classrooms. He believes there are numerous opportunities for students to express themselves creatively. He stated:

So in my classroom again grade 7 & 8, these are still kids but teens, I will ask them okay why you believe that? That's what you believe but why you believe that? In this multimedia activity we are doing, I say okay, explain to me why you chose that? Last year, when we did Tele-media, I said you going to wear this costume but how does it fit to what you are trying to say? This phrase, is it say what you mean? Really? You know I get your opinion but where is the clue? So this is a common theme in my teaching. I asked them to justify their choices unless we talk about explicit skills. Now in terms of general teaching, it's all over the map. Some teachers, you know, honestly their photocopier is their best friend. Others challenge the kids. These are kids that are naturally curious for the most part and inquisitive and so in that case what they will do is their projects are structured to require them to not only satisfy the needs of finding what they need but as you might see a high school or university level paper to justify and provide rationale for your outcomes. (Don, p. 9, lines 391-402)

Don explained his approaches to teach media literacy to actively engage students into critical thinking and being aware of their choices.

... the idea of how I use media and the idea that what kids need in terms of media, the idea spreading out the learning opportunities- differentiating learning opportunities and then engaging as many of the sensory aspects as possible. We can't do that every day and we can't even do it every period. But if we can do that, we are touching different



learning styles and different ways of being engaged. Sometimes it's making cookies, you know, because they want to touch something. Some of these kids love science and I think in part because it's very discrete and this is true at this level, you know, this is what works, this is the formula and they like that sense of concreteness as opposed to social studies where there may not be an easy answer if there is any answer. But the role of media is to engage them and forced them into thinking about what they are doing what are their choices. (Don, p. 9, lines 422-431)

In response to the notion of limitations in the process of media literacy integration, Don indicated that many elementary school teachers feel challenged for inadequate training, time constraints, work overload, insufficient resources and supports. Don suggests a need for adequate resources and media specialists to work with teachers to facilitate media educational practices. His suggestion implies the idea of increasing teachers' self-efficacy and reducing their stress and time constraints in order to provide an authentic and positive media educational environment for students to experience an optimum and exciting learning process to enhance their critical thinking and creative expressions. Such an environment requires elementary school teachers to have adequate training in the teacher education programs and later in their years of teaching. In addition, teachers need to have a technical media specialist to be available in school in order to support teachers in delivering their lessons in media educational activities.

Now when we're talking about media, the only practical solution in my mind is that we need to have specialist to create it, we need resources because we don't have time, at least in the broad sense, to create them. We need math textbooks. We can't come up with a math lesson every day. You can't give me an outcome and say okay create lesson sheet. You can't do that. I do adapt, I do adjust, I pull from different sources, but I can't and I

don't have time as a classroom teacher. None of us do. That's why a lot of people retire very very very tired after 30 years. (Don, p. 11, lines 493-499)

Don spoke about other kinds of limitations in the process of media literacy integration. He expressed his concerns that some teachers were uncertain about using different digital media devices and there was a risk of functional difficulties in the classroom.

What always work are our new markers and whiteboard. They always work. Here are the notes. This is how you do this question. It always works and whenever anything you want to plug-in, anything that has more than visual media, you taking a bit of a risk. We had nothing but incessant daily Internet connectivity problems in this building ... and it happened every period. (Don, p. 10, lines 451-456)

#### 4.3.5 Measuring competencies in media education

In response to the theme of measuring competencies in media education, teachers agreed that children already possess incredible flexibility and adaptability to change and they have ability to learn the new technologies so quickly. With the rapid growth of media technology and children's resourcefulness in using technology and accessing information, teachers believe that there are no standard measuring indicators for assessing media literacy as an outcome of media pedagogical processes. Some teachers commented that, in today's media culture, elementary school students, in their own unique ways, learn conceptual and technical aspects of critical media education and create their own media representations. However, most teachers believe that students might learn quickly how to use media devices and pieces of technology but they need to learn the conceptual parts of media and technology as well.

Generally, teachers' experiences of using rubrics in elementary classrooms imply the idea of encouraging students to assess themselves, based on an established set of criteria, for the

degree of development in the learning process and achievement of learning outcomes. The originality and the individual means of creative expressions in collaborative projects are very important parts of criteria for measuring students' progress and competencies. Encouraging students to use rubrics for self and peer assessment provides valuable ongoing feedback for them that reveal their areas of strength and areas that need more improvement. This continuous feedback mechanism for self and peer assessment helps students to actively engage in their own learning and responsibly move forward in a positive direction to enhance their abilities to develop meta-cognitive skills in a dialogical and collaborative teaching and learning environment. Children have a strong tendency to participate in a collaborative teaching and learning environment where they share their knowledge beyond school walls with friends, community and at home with their parents and family members.

Teachers agreed that most students have a fair knowledge of using technology to find information. Also students understand media culture and its effects on people's behavior to some extent but they are not fully aware of how much they are being influenced by mass media themselves. Therefore, teachers confirmed that incorporating media educational practices in elementary classrooms requires a comprehensive and meaningful assessment and evaluation of the active engagement of students in critical thinking and creative expression based on the key concepts of media literacy. Teachers need to consider that every individual student has different levels of knowledge and learning capabilities. Therefore identifying individuals' learning needs and establishing a set of criteria for self-assessment is vital for their sustained learning development.

Teachers highlighted the idea of competencies in terms of measuring skills, attitudes and behaviours of children in media education outcomes. Their perception implies the notions of

critical viewing and skepticism in regards to the attitude of questioning and examining the validity of any given knowledge, facts, opinion, and accepted beliefs. They also highlighted the parents' role for encouraging their children to be critical about what they view on media.

Most teachers stressed the importance of planning and establishing a practical media education framework starting from younger children in primary grades for sustained media educational practices in elementary schools. They shared their ideas about storytelling and reading as an effective type of media educational practice for primary grades in elementary schools. Children in primary grades need to learn about nuts and bolts of media technology in terms of how media productions in different formats are made. By the time they get to grade five, students can be engaged in more of critical thinking, analysis, and creation of media productions. There is a great need for more investment and planning to facilitate media educational activities for younger children in elementary schools.

Teachers were positive in their perceptions about how the quality of teaching and the learning environment had improved in elementary classrooms. They stressed the importance of professional development sessions for teachers. Some teachers that are very keen to improve their competencies in media education, can sign up for the relevant professional development sessions and become catalyst teachers who can teach critical media literacy to other teachers in the school. Teachers also highlighted their vital role as mentors and facilitators in media educational activities. Teachers need to accept and be comfortable with facts that students in this rapidly changing era are technologically savvy and learn how to use media technology faster than teachers. Teachers need to be firm about their role as mentors and offer their explicit guidance for students in the process of learning to utilize their technical skills to proactively learn about the ethical, critical, and creative aspects of media education.

Teachers expressed concerns that today's children are very savvy in the use of media technology despite not being critical thinkers but mere consumers in our media saturated culture. Generally, the dominant criteria for assessing students' competencies are based on the standard testing and the outcome. Teachers imply that children need be assessed based on their meta-cognitive development and conceptual content of their creative expression, which is more important than the technical aspects of their production in the process of media educational practices rather than the product as an outcome. In a sense, the context and the process are a vehicle to reach the destination, which carry the learning outcome. Through collaboration and experiencing different methods of practicing critical media education and sharing among elementary school teachers, there is a great potential for developing a practical framework in order to engage students in cross-curricular activities and provide a set of criteria for their self-assessment in elementary classrooms.

Kathy's statement on children's competencies implies that children already possess incredible flexibility and adaptability to change and they have ability to learn the new technology so quickly. Students might learn quickly how to use media devices and pieces of technology but they need to learn the conceptual parts of media and technology as well.

Although they have access to the information but trying to be able to use that information to come up with their own theories, that's still a long way to go, I think using information in a meaningful way is still a big challenge for kids. (Kathy, p. 6., lines 230-232)

Ted shared his experience for measuring competencies in media educational activities. His experience of using rubrics implies the idea of encouraging students to assess themselves for the degree of development in the learning process and achievement of learning outcome. Encouraging students to use rubrics for self-assessment provides a valuable ongoing feedback for

them that reveal their areas of strength and areas that need more improvement. This continuous feedback mechanism for self-assessment helps students to move forward in a positive direction and enhances their abilities in the learning process.

We use rubrics. I think that the rubrics have to be shared and targeted to what you need to learn so the key skills to learn is how students are able to formulate questions and draw conclusions based on what they've seen or heard or witnessed. Can students evaluate how to analyze the effectiveness of the message presented? Is that message effective for all audiences? Or more effective for other particular audiences? So that would be another skill. Another one that we learn in middle grades is that we start learning about reading between the lines and inferencing and they'll be other skills finding underlying messages or opinions and discerning fact and opinions ... (Ted, p. 6, lines 232-240)

Ted shared more about ways of assessment and evaluation in his classroom. He pinpointed on self-assessment and peer-assessment as well as how they have been used for projects.

A big part of our Language Art curriculum is self-assessment and peer-assessment and so any time we do a project in class we'll do a self-assessment where they do some judging list of things they did well and what might they do differently the next time and we do it in all writing assignments -- we do it in anything, projects, we've done some projects representing and asking themselves questions and share with students. They will do some peer assessing again to look at how have I done here? And it's not always the teacher telling them how they have done. They need to have it handed in too. In a sense they would assess: here is what I learned, here is what I'm learning, here is what I've

done, and here is what I would do something differently next time. (Ted, p. 6, lines 254-262)

Ted implies the idea of a continuous feedback mechanism for self and peer assessment that encourages active engagement of students in their own learning individually and collaboratively. For Martin, the originality and the individual means of creative expressions in collaborative projects are a very important part of criteria for measuring students' competencies.

I think in terms of attitudes and behaviours, I think focusing on problem-solving and the independence in the media literacy is what needs to be measured but I think in terms of skills, I think it's their ability to synthesize a solid product as a whole and not an individual parts so that they can come about things in all sorts of different ways but in the end they get something that is original, that's creative, and that extends a message and however they get there should be up to them. (Martin, p. 5, lines 205-210)

Martin stated that students in elementary schools have a good technical knowledge of where to find information. They also have a strong understanding of pop culture and some are aware of how it affects people but they need to develop a deeper understanding of media culture and its effects on their own self. Martin states, "I mean they can see where media is affecting somebody else but they don't necessarily understand how it's affecting and how it's changing or eliciting their own behaviours that they're showing" (p. 5, lines 223-225). Martin's concluding statement implies that incorporating effective media educational practices in elementary classrooms requires the active engagement of students and teachers in critical thinking and creative expression. Carl spoke about the challenges of assessment and the ways of measuring competencies in the elementary classroom.

... getting into assessment and measuring and outcomes is so important. The Public School Board has outcomes and ways of assessing individual students but when you get into student to student to student, you know, that's where we come into real problems with assessment. What is really easy for one student may be really difficult for another student. So when you were assessing each individual student, you really have to focus on the individual student as opposed to as a group and that really gets to be a tough, really tough area in elementary. (Carl, p. 6, lines 227-232)

Carl implies the idea that because every individual student has different levels of knowledge and learning capabilities, identifying individual's learning needs and establishing a set of criteria for self assessment is vital for their sustained learning development.

In Carl's opinion, "because children spend so much time using media tools such as Texting, Internet, You Tube, video games" (p. 6, lines 257-258), they are surpassing their parents in terms of technical skills when using media technology. Carl confirms the idea that children need guidance and directions to be able to learn the components of critical media literacy in the classroom. Carl stated, "as far as having the knowledge and the basics, it is part of kids' life and they teach each other. They get together and share knowledge and it spreads like wild fire. They also spread that to the parents" (p. 6, lines 264-266). For Carl, children have a strong tendency to participate in a collaborative teaching and learning environment where they share their knowledge beyond school walls, at home with their parents, family members, friends, and community.

Carl shared his ideas about the types of media that are beneficial to primary grades in elementary schools. He believes that there is a vital need for devoting more investment to facilitate media educational activities for younger children in elementary schools.



For younger grades in elementary school things like story reading that include a lot of visual elements are very beneficial for engaging younger kids in critical and creative thinking and learning, but it takes a lot of preparation to get these younger kids to experience something that they can relate to, make attachment, and understand. So it takes more time and energy to put things together for younger kids and definitely community participation and parents can play a major role to make this learning process more successful for young students. If younger kids see things happening in real time, they live in the present rather than for the future and participate in things that are right in front of them. So when we deal with younger students, it takes a lot more economical and financial input into it and I think there is a need to have more planning for younger kids to develop critical and creative thinking. (Carl, p. 8, lines 329-338)

Helen emphasized the idea of competencies in terms of measuring skills, attitudes and behaviours of children in media education outcomes. Her perception implies the importance of critical viewing and skepticism in regards to the attitude of questioning and examining the validity of any given knowledge, facts, opinion, and accepted beliefs.

... when you receive information you should always question what's the source of that information, what's the bias of the person presenting that information? Like those kinds of questions should be there whether it's a teacher telling them this, or the TV telling this, or website telling them this, or a magazine article. They should always question those things, and that's what I would see as sort of the attitudes and behaviours in terms of the skill. (Helen, p. 7, lines 281-285)

Helen believes that parents play a big role in encouraging their kids to be critical about what they view on media.

I think the more parents talk to their kids about what they're watching, I think the better it gets in terms of questioning. So even if it's saying to them- you know, watching news together and talking about the events and saying "you know, what's missing here? Like, what questions do you have about that story?" "I don't think they told us this. I wonder why they're choosing that to lead the news. I wonder what else is going on". Like, just that questioning, just asking question, which is what inquiry, is supposed to be encouraging in our students. It is really difficult for them... is really difficult for them to ask questions. They want to be told what they're supposed to learn and they don't want to ask questions and that piece- if- you know, if that does start at home at a younger age, it just becomes how they view things. It becomes how they view the world, it becomes how they view everything, and it's a worldview. [...] And I think for a lot of reasons that's a challenge for a lot of parents, they're busy, they're both working, you know? They don't have the time, it's really hard ... (Helen, pp. 8-9, lines 356-368)

Helen believes that kids in primary grades need to learn about nuts and bolts of media technology in terms of how media productions in different formats are made. By the time they get to grade five, students can be engaged more in critical thinking, analysis, and creation of media productions. Helen states,

I think in some lower grades, what are most beneficial are nuts and bolts. What is a commercial? Where do we see ads? The fact that we see ads when we go online, that we see ads before we go to a movie, who presents that information, all of that kind of stuff could be in lower grades. I think what's most beneficial in senior grades is a critical analysis of media, how are we defining media? How media impact you? You need to produce an ad that you are consciously manipulating the viewer, not just a funny

commercial”. Really pushing them to be, you know, what technique are you going to use here? (Helen, p. 10, lines 420-426)

Helen, like most teachers, stressed the importance of planning and establishing a practical media education framework starting from younger children in primary grades for sustained media educational practices in elementary schools.

... if teachers start doing inquiry the way we’re supposed to, from a really young grade, I think that will support media education. I definitely think it will. But it’s almost like we need a scope and sequence of here’s what should be covered. Here are the expectations. (p. 10, lines 411-414).

Henry found the idea of competencies and measuring children’s skills, attitudes and behaviours challenging. Henry shared his experience of dealing with assessment and evaluation with several examples:

Students probably know how to use a word processor better than some teachers and some features of it better than some teachers and so where it’s moving to, is tablet devices or computers. Kids know how to use them technically in a technically superior way than teachers. They’re faster at it; they’ve learned that at home from their friends and their outside out of school education, so they’ve learned it from there. I’m not sure how you measure that. Conversely, one student that knows how to do something, say, on an iPhone and he’ll show it to a student that does not have an iPhone, and that student that does not have an iPhone goes “oh! I see how you did this”, and to measure that I think would be... if I was to set a measurement of what the students know, if I was to use a checklist of specific things, the bar would not be high enough on my checklist. The students know more. And those students that don’t know would learn more almost

instantaneously. So I think it's really hard... like, I mean, things you could say as a student using, like ethics, a student using it for negative messages, positive messages, explaining their feelings. Is it done in an ethical way? Are they using it in an appropriate time? Are they using it... and the appropriate time can be set by the teacher saying ok, we're doing science now. You can use your electronic device now to research science. I can sort of grade that. And I can also grade if they're on the right content page but the other part of it is ... what if a student studying the human body system decides to go from an organ level and say okay, I'm really interested. I'm going to micro level of this organ. Now, as a teacher, I think he's really sort of branched off, but he is enhancing his learning and he's now become an expert in that one area that nobody else in the classroom, maybe nobody else in the school knows about. I've had students that have gone to that level. As a teacher, I would say okay, they didn't necessarily use it exactly as I said but they learned so much more. So than in the evaluation of it, from my point of view, I say, okay they're definitely in an enriched part of their learning. That's exciting to see as a teacher but to mark and evaluate, it is sometimes a challenge. (Henry, pp. 5-6, lines 222-245)

Henry talked about the importance of parents' involvement in media education activities, which can be an effective strategy for active engagements of students in elementary schools.

In our school, there is lots of activities going on and I think in this area parent's support for what's happening in school in some ways I guess would be something that we need to consider as a useful strategy. We need the administration to recognize the need for having media awareness sessions with parents. (Henry, p. 8, lines 332-335)

Henry also spoke about how to improve the quality of teaching and the learning environment in elementary classrooms. He pointed out the importance of professional development sessions for teachers. He also highlighted the teachers' vital role as mentors and facilitators in media educational activities.

Saskatoon Public Schools Division offers many different professional development opportunities. We had some sessions on the use of technology in classrooms. There were 3 or 4 mandatory sessions and some additional optional sessions. Teachers that wanted to really involve could sign for the following year. And I think what that does get one person in school that has training and influence. So that's the catalyst teacher that should teach the rest of the teachers and staff. But that also takes number of years to do and the problem with the technology is it changes so rapidly that if it takes you 3 or 4 years, it will be so out of date. But if you focus on ethics and teaching critical thinking structure, then that really doesn't go out of vogue ever. Media technology is an area that kids like to engage but it is always changing and a teacher really can't become an expert of the technology. You have to feel comfortable that students know more than you know. And then you have to be strong enough to say this is how you are going to use it. I think this is an exciting time because it is rapidly changing and new teachers embrace it and it's going to be great for kids. (Henry, p. 8, lines 337-349)

Don, like other teachers, expressed his concerns about today's children being very savvy using media technology and not being critical thinkers but mere consumers in our media saturated culture. He criticizes the dominant criteria for assessing students' competencies that is based on the standard testing and the outcome. His ideas on measuring competencies and assessment in media education imply that children need be assessed based on their meta-

cognitive development and conceptual content of their creative expression which is more important than the technical aspects of their production in the process of media educational practices rather than the product as an outcome.

Today's children are way more savvy on some level than our generation would be. Because when I grew up, we had three channels (the kids laugh at that) and one of them was the French channel. So I never watched television except Saturday morning because I wanted to see Bugs bunny in the cartoons for the first couple of hours every morning with my brother and then go outside. Now of course the kids consume far more than we did. Generally, kids are not really good critical thinkers. They consume because it's fun, it's interesting but if you ask them why, they'll have a hard time to respond and I think it's dangerous for society because it allows people whose main goal is not the betterment of society or the improvement of society but the consumption of society essentially whatever it means to provide them, to produce things which aren't necessarily healthy. So what skills, attitudes or behaviours should be measured? Well, that assumes of course that we have specific outcomes that are going to be measured. That assumes that we are required as teachers to deliver a certain outcome because this is really what we're paid to do. If it's not there, we're not to get measured on it. In the past that might have been true but we're going to a much more—we're evolving into more American system where the outcomes are measured by assessment for learning outcomes, by standardized testing, and even to the point now there's talk that in the next years, we'll see ranking of schools. (Don, pp. 11-12, lines 505-520)

Don spoke of evaluation and measuring competencies in the classroom. He implies that the context and the process are a vehicle to reach the destination, which carry the learning outcome.

As a teacher, I know I have to start with the outcome and then the process is how I can get to the outcome. So always I look at my end results before I start at the beginning. As long as you understand as a classroom teacher, we know what our destination is and we are going to be measured on when we reached that destination for both as teachers and students. The context and the process is our pathway we hope to success to that outcome. (Don, p. 13, lines 561-565)

Don spoke about the types of media educational practices that he perceives to be the most beneficial to elementary school classrooms. He shared his experiences of dealing with his students to actively engage in some meaningful media activities that help students to develop critical thinking, to be informed decision-makers, and to be more effective citizens.

Trying to be engaging, and aim for curricular outcomes ... Try to get them to think about what they're doing. Always make them ask why and it's harder on them but I think it will make them into better citizens and the long term longitudinal so the fact is they become more effective citizens and we get a better country... I think that critical thinking and media education and keeping your mind from being poisoned, and making good choices will lead to a long-term effect, which is a better society. (Don, p. 14, lines 635-542)

#### 4.4 Summary

This chapter has presented findings and analysis of the data collected from interviews with seven elementary teachers. I presented the findings in a narrative form in order to give voice to seven elementary school teachers who expressed their opinions and experiences on

integration of critical media educational experiences. I employed a thematic analysis to provide context for the findings of the interviews based on the following major themes:

- The Contexts of media education
- Agency of change
- Engagements and supports in media education
- The Instructional processes in media education
- Competencies in media education outcome

The principal findings, based on the teachers' responses, are indicative of the importance of cross-curricular integration of media educational practices in elementary classrooms. Teachers' perceptions for successful integration of critical media educational practices across curricula in elementary schools imply that elementary school classrooms must have more access to new media technology, and supported by smaller class sizes to enhance students' learning. Teachers believe that schools must have media specialist support services to oversee technical issues, and to reduce teachers' workload and stress. Teachers also feel that they must have more professional development opportunities to enhance their knowledge, technically and conceptually, in critical media educational practices in elementary school classrooms. Teachers perceptions imply that these practices provide a dynamic teaching and learning environment for students and teachers in becoming positive agents of change, which can promote critical thinking, creativity, and positive transformation for self and community.



## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter reflects the discussion of the study findings organized in relation with the major themes derived from the three research sub-questions. It highlights the significance of the findings in relation to the major themes, their relation to the literature, and their implications for future media educational practices in elementary classrooms; implications and suggestions for future research on this topic; and finally, conclusions and recommendations.

#### 5.1 Discussion

The following paragraphs discuss findings based on the major themes, their relation to the literature, and their implications for future media educational practices in elementary classrooms. Five major themes have been identified in participants' responses to the interview questions:

- The Contexts of media education
- Agency of change
- Engagement and supports in media education
- The Instructional processes in media education
- Competencies in media education outcome

##### 5.1.1 The Contexts of media education

Teachers discussed a range of opinions about the critical contexts of media educational practices through the Tele-media unit in grades seven and eight, and media education particularly within subjects such as English Language Art and Social Studies. Teachers expressed their experience with the Tele-media unit in terms of the length of the unit, the type and level of instruction, and the degree of the engagement by both teachers and students. According to most

participants, the Tele-media unit offers basic instructions in terms of conceptual and technical content. The unit introduces students to the basics of Television Production while producing a commercial project in a media studio at the Saskatoon Public Schools Division. They spend one day shooting for the commercial in the studio and one week editing in the classroom with one editing suite borrowed from SPSD. It provides limited media activities in a short time that do not engage students in critical thinking and creative expression. Since the Tele-media unit is not a mandatory activity in elementary classrooms, only some teachers taught it as a Practical and Applied Art (PAA) curricular activity. However, it is a good idea to use the PAA resources, if available, to implement and integrate critical media literacy education in variety of subjects. The elementary school students can become media literate by learning the values, ethical, technical, critical, and creative aspects of media education through a cross-curricular approach to teaching and learning.

Most teachers agreed that although children are technologically savvy, and have easy access to variety of media and communication devices, the majority of elementary school students do not have the competencies to understand, analyze, and evaluate media messages and their underlying meanings. Because children are attracted to use a variety of media and being greatly influenced by them in their daily lives, it must be self-evidence that justifies the idea of teaching it at schools (Buckingham, 1991). Teachers can play a major role to provide a good learning environment for students to redirect their interest into a positive pathway. This positive pathway allows students to develop “essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy” (Thoman and Jolls, 2005a, p. 190). Media competencies require learning the ethical and practical aspects of media including the development of critical thinking and active engagement in creative process of media educational practices (Lahiji, 2008).

Deficiencies in access to media production facilities and resources in the elementary schools must be resolved; and there is an emergent need for more media communication and technology access beyond what the existing Tele-media unit activities offer in the elementary schools. The idea of access in the learning process is an essential part of critical media education. Critical media education in the elementary schools is about providing children an educational environment with access to the means of cultural production and creative expressions, which promotes and encourages students to use those means in meaningful and creative ways.

Children are naturally curious, active, and competent learners. In a dynamic teaching and learning environment, children's natural curiosity stimulates their creativity with an urge to produce ideas, and a desire to reflect on actions. In such a dynamic teaching and learning environment, students actively engage in critical thinking (reflection) and experience creative expressions (action) to create new knowledge and develop a critical consciousness for positive social change (Freire, 1972, 1973; Shor, 1993; Giddens, 1991). Through critical thinking and creative expressions, children become more selective in their moral choices and their behaviours toward the development of informed and positive decision-making abilities. These abilities filter out negative alternatives, so that they can identify what is "important" (Whitehead, 1938) in their journey of discovery, creation, re-creation and self-transformation. These ideas constitute Whitehead's (1929b) inquiry-based learning in the three stages of romance (enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning), precision (learning the mechanics and grammars of specialized subject matters), and generalization (wise mode of becoming in general context and wholeness of logical ideas and classifications). These stages can motivate students to gain fresh experiences of excitement, imagination, and creativity through critical media educational practices in the

elementary classrooms, where both teachers and students participate in a creative space that embraces and fosters imaginative awareness for alternative possibilities (Greene, 1995a), and become proactive and take actions for positive change.

All teachers expressed opinions supporting the importance of engaging students in more of media educational practices to learn about the power and persuasiveness of advertisements and messages they receive through mass media. They stressed the importance of students' readiness and their attraction to using multi-media for developing critical reading/viewing and critical thinking through unpacking or deconstructing media messages, and "to express themselves, explore their identities, and connect with peers" (Rheingold, 2008). With adequate access and explicit instructional process, students will be encouraged to proactively engage in producing their own media representations and conveying effective and positive messages to make a difference and change in self and community.

Most teachers expressed their perceptions of media education within the contexts of inquiry-based learning in which students engage in an action-oriented process for developing critical and creative thinking about the core concepts of media literacy. The inquiry-based learning as an action-oriented process requires a creative educational environment that allows exploratory engagement of students to critically analyze, evaluate, and understand the messages of media and their meanings and creatively express their opinions by producing their own media representations. Students must be active participants of this learning process by critically questioning, having dialogues, understanding variety of viewpoints, and producing media in variety of contexts.

Critical media literacy's creative approach to learning through cross-curricular activities extends the enhancement of learning beyond the traditional approach of reading and writing.

Critical media education extends the notion of empowering children through critical reading/viewing (reflection) and creative writing/producing media (action). Cranton (1996) describes reflection and action as the process that learners identify the assumptions governing their actions, locate the sources of the assumptions, question the meaning of the assumptions, and develop alternative ways for their actions. Critical reflection refers to critical thinking that includes decoding media messages, challenging dominant media discourse, and critically analyzing media's social implications and their effects. Creative action refers to creative producing which includes learning various media production techniques, developing progressive ideas to create their own representations, and using media technologies for creative expressions.

Elementary teachers have an important role to play in empowering children to develop a good sense of their own self, their abilities and flexibilities in the learning process. In a good sense, elementary teaching is an extension of parenting. As Shor (1992) implies, teachers must facilitate an empowering student-centered and democratic environment that promotes critical thinking and creativity for positive self-transformation and social change. It is a dynamic and creative space of learning for dialogue and interdependent relationships among teachers and students, which plays a major role in developing students' critical thinking and creative expressions. When students along with their teachers express any kind of creative endeavor that evokes positive messages for change, they are sending out and spreading those ideas in their growing circles of influence in places associated with their social network, such as school, home, community, and society at large. This influential process for change evokes people's emotional impulse to be agents of positive change, which help them to shift much easier to be in tune with more of their true state of being in their creative expressions.

The interdisciplinary nature of critical media literacy education and the special position of elementary school teachers as they teach most of the courses in their classrooms provide a dynamic educational environment. In this learning environment, teachers can, potentially, develop the ability to integrate critical media educational practices in the form of cross-curricular projects for students in a variety of subjects, particularly, Social Studies and English Language Arts. These implementations and integrations provide a dynamic teaching and learning environment that is both active and reflective process (Freire, 1972, 1973). This process has great potentials for empowering students to critically reflect, understand, and evaluate the underlying meanings behind the media messages. Critical media educational environment serves as a catalyst for creating an open and democratic dialogue where students can actively engage in group discussions and debates with their peers, teachers, friends, family, and community members. Also students enhance their learning by having the opportunity to freely express themselves and creatively produce their own media representations in a variety of media and contexts.

#### 5.1.2 Agency of Change

Agency of change implies the notion of advocacy and promotion of stewardship towards positive change. Developing critical thinking and creative engagement through media educational practices enhances students' cross-curricular competencies. These competencies enable them to become more aware of their potential as responsible citizens and advocates of positive change at different levels and capacities. This awareness stimulates a kind of social impulse to form a circle of influence, which potentially, expands through calibrating the expressive impulse and using the power of networking from school, home, and community.

Collaboration among both teachers and students in a dynamic teaching and learning environment stimulates participants' proactivity to challenge the status quo and take action for positive change. Teachers in the study emphasized the significant role of elementary teachers in students' media competencies and their proactivity towards positive self-awareness in "a reflexive process of connecting personal and social change" (Giddens, 1991, p. 33). Teachers' roles as mentors that promote positive change for their students' awareness and proactivity, place them in a critical position as change agents. They create a circle of influence that magnify and amplify the positive impact of change that "can trump the efforts of policy makers or administrators to change practice" (Darling-Hammond, 2003, as cited in Latimer, 2012, p. 15) and extends the notion of reflection and action towards positive change among their students.

Teachers' perceptions on students' proactive participation in critical media educational practices imply that although challenging, encouraging students to get into critical thinking and creative engagement paves the way for a dynamic learning environment. In such an environment, students create meaningful and positive contents using audio and visual expressions as effective ways of communication that convey powerful messages in a variety of contexts and formats. Students' engagement in critical thinking and creative expression resonates with cultivating curiosity that encourages exploration, discovery, creation, re-creation and a self-transformation (Freire, 1998).

The elementary school students in different grades have different capacities for critical thinking and creative expressions for becoming agents of change. Teachers expressed that students in upper grades are more conscious critical thinkers than those in the primary grades. They develop more self-awareness and abilities to make informed decisions and to conceive creative expressions and become change agents. Implementing media educational activities into

subjects such as Social Studies and English Language Art is an effective strategy to help students to develop critical thinking and creative expressions on their way to become agents of positive change.

### 5.1.3 Engagement and supports in media education

The inquiry-based learning nature of media educational practices requires active engagements of learners, resourceful and engaging teachers, caring and encouraging parents, hands-on teaching and learning resources, and extensive technical, conceptual, and financial supports are vitally important to the academic advancement of children in elementary school classrooms. There is a need for increasing the level of engagement, not only for teachers and students, but also for parents in media educational practices across curriculum. Parents also play an active role in shaping children's relationships to emerging media and technologies by understanding their learning capabilities and reinforcing their development and competencies to explore their self-identities, creatively express themselves, and connect with their peers. Critical media literacy emphasizes "the role of teachers in helping students and their parents to become media-literate users and supporters of alternative media" (Torres & Mercado, 2006, p. 260).

The potentials and values of critical media education are not being fully realized in elementary schools yet. However, there are levels of ongoing media educational practices happening in different capacities in schools, at homes, and in communities in everyday lives of children. Although there is limited access to the Internet and media technology in many elementary schools, some modes of media education are still being practiced in some classrooms such as Social Studies, English language Arts, Science, and Health. The level of engagement and learning in media educational practices is greatly reduce for both teachers and students due to the lack of easy access to reliable equipment and resources.



Media technology as an extension of educational environment implies providing an authentic learning and teaching environment that “meets the needs of students to be wise consumers of media”, “engages students”, and “provides an opportunity for integrating all subject areas” (Thoman & Jolls, 2005b, p. 40). This educational environment facilitates easy access to reliable technology for media educational practices with an increased level of engagement in inquiry-based learning classrooms. With such a dynamic learning environment, there is a great potential for students to develop critical thinking and creative expressions. Children in elementary schools can potentially engage in media educational practices across curriculum through questioning and critically reflecting on the underlying meanings of the messages and representations of media. In this process, they develop their abilities of thinking and identifying their informed choices for making decisions in everyday life.

Teachers agree that they need to upgrade their knowledge of critical media literacy, technically and conceptually, by participating in professional development sessions facilitated by the Saskatoon Public School Division. Many elementary teachers have realized that media education needs extensive sustained supports. Potentially, any means of support can be offered by the Ministry of Education, media industry, colleges of education, communities, and any formations of networks and associations that promote the exchange of good practice and developing critical media literacy education. These sustained supports facilitate access to appropriate and updated media production and post-production technology, having explicit instructions on media educational training in teacher education programs, having training to update their knowledge of media technology and instructional design through professional development offered by the Public School Board, and ongoing update of teaching and learning resources and an electronic portfolio produced and compiled by teachers.

#### 5.1.4 The Instructional processes in media education

There is an emerging need for developing a framework for integrating media literacy education across curriculum in elementary schools and in teacher education programs at the universities. The reason for incorporating media education in teacher education programs available to elementary teacher candidates is to ensure that future teachers gain the knowledge and skills to keep up with the fast paced developing technology to offer better guidance to their students.

Critical media integration in teacher education programs is essential for elementary teacher candidates to become media literate and competent to provide a dynamic learning environment and set out a practical framework to incorporate critical media literacy education in cross-curricular activities in elementary classrooms. According to González & Wagenaar (2003), teachers' professional training and competencies can be defined in three categories of learning: "knowledge (conceptual knowledges), skills (procedural knowledges), and attitudes (attitudinal and/or value-based knowledges). The learning results should orient the construction of the curriculum and allow formularizing concrete evaluative indicators" (as cited in Guzman & Nussbaum, 2009, p. 454).

The following statement by Garcia, Seglem, & Share (2013) is an example of how critical media literacy can be practiced in a teacher education program. I can closely relate their statement to my own experience of incorporating critical media literacy projects in my teaching for elementary teacher candidates.

One assignment, the Wanted Poster, is an opportunity for new teachers to learn basic computer skills for combining images with words and visual design. The assignment also provides the space for student teachers to create posters to use as examples for their own students to see digital alternatives for demonstrating learning and reframing the discourse about whose story is seen and heard in the classroom. (Garcia, Seglem, & Share, 2013. p. 116)

Teachers' recommendations to offer media literacy courses for teacher candidates imply that integration of critical media literacy can begin in teacher education programs at the universities. Teachers, who graduate from such programs, will become resourceful mentors to set a strong foundation for sustainable media integration across curriculum in elementary schools.

Since elementary school teachers teach most of the subjects, they potentially develop particular abilities to create and deliver critical media literacy in cross-curricular projects in their classrooms. Elementary teachers play a great role to encourage and empower their students to include critical media educational activities in a variety of subjects. Students with positive vision alongside with their open-minded teachers can be potential agents of positive change in media and technology integration in elementary schools.

Many elementary school teachers feel challenged by inadequate training, time constraints, work overload, large class sizes, limited access, insufficient resources and supports. There is an urgent need for adequate training and resources for elementary teachers and having media specialists to work with teachers to facilitate media educational practices. This urgent need implies increasing teachers' self-efficacy and reducing their stress and time constraints to provide an authentic and positive media educational environment for students to experience an optimum and exciting learning process to enhance their critical thinking and creative expressions. Such an environment requires elementary school teachers to have adequate training in the teacher education programs and later in their years of teaching. In addition, teachers must have a technical media specialist to be available in school to support teachers in delivering their lessons in media educational activities.

Some teachers are concerned about different levels of media literacy competencies among students in classrooms as a major obstacle for instructional processes. On the other hand, some other teachers believe that collaboration among students is a positive strategy in the learning process. Collaboration in groups has the potential for encouraging students to practice learning and teaching with their fellow classmates. Engaging students in practicing teaching and learning in groups, along with gaining a collective knowledge technically and conceptually, helps students to develop a sense of care, empathy, responsibility, respect, and interdependent relationships.

Teaching about mass media requires a flexible and an explicit instructional framework that facilitates cross-curricular activities for children to learn about mass media in a variety of subjects. Teachers' perceptions on instructional processes imply that teachers' resourcefulness, flexibility, and open-mindedness play a great role in exploring different instructional methods to set a ground for each classroom where students explore, learn, understand, analyze, and create meanings. In the learning process, different methods of instruction offer a great flexibility for both teachers and students to explore a variety of ways of discovering and understanding media content. This flexibility provides a practical learning environment for children to build the essential skills of inquiry through questioning, discussing, and debating in a variety of contexts to develop a deeper understanding about the role of media in our culture. The importance of teaching about mass media in the elementary classroom implies the significance of critical thinking and creative expressions in understanding the ethical and practical aspects of media across curriculum.

Teachers' perceptions of instructional processes in media education imply that sharing ideas through questioning, discussions, and debates in classroom alongside with teachers'

mentorship and guidance, opens up a new pathway for children to move forward and actively engage in critical media educational processes and explore the role and the effects of media in their culture. This pathway creates a dynamic space to calibrate and tune in for developing an authentic instructional mechanism that provides a better understanding of the processes of critical media education in terms of critical thinking and creative expression. Facilitating courses by the Teacher Education Programs at the universities and professional development sessions by the School Board, equip elementary teachers to be competent and resourceful teachers in media education to offer good quality instructions, both conceptually and technically, for their students in critical media educational practices in an era where technology is growing rapidly.

Acknowledgement of the necessity of keeping up with the fast paced media and technology implies recognizing the potential for elementary teachers to get into the stream of unlimited available possibilities and set out a visionary mandate for life long learning.

The participants' perceptions on media education imply their fair understanding of explicit instructions on media educational approaches and its required and essential needs. This implication highlights the potentials and possibilities of developing an explicit instructional framework, using experienced teachers' input, for critical media education in elementary classrooms.

#### 5.1.5 Measuring competencies in media education

Children already possess incredible flexibility and adaptability to change and they have ability to learn the new technologies so quickly. With the rapid growth of media technology and children's resourcefulness in using technology and accessing information, there are no standard measuring indicators for assessing media literacy as an outcome of media pedagogical processes. In today's media culture, children in elementary schools have their own unique ways for learning

conceptual and technical aspects of critical media education and creating their own media representation. However, students might learn quickly how to use media devices and pieces of technology but they need to learn the conceptual parts of media and technology.

Teachers' experiences of using rubrics in elementary classrooms imply encouraging students to assess themselves, based on an established set of criteria, for development in the learning process and achievement of learning outcome. The originality and the individual means of creative expressions in collaborative projects are a very important part of criteria for measuring students' progress and competencies. Encouraging students to use rubrics for self and peer assessment provides valuable ongoing feedback for them that reveal their areas of strength and areas that need more improvement. This continuous feedback mechanism for self and peer assessment helps students to actively engage in their own learning and responsibly move forward in a positive direction to enhance their abilities to develop meta-cognitive skills in a dialogical and collaborative teaching and learning environment. Children have a strong tendency to participate in collaborative teaching and learning environments where they share their knowledge beyond school walls with friends, community and at home with their parents and family members.

Teachers agreed that most students know of using technology to find information. Also students understand media culture and its effects on people's behavior to some extent but they are not fully aware of how much they are being influenced by mass media themselves. Therefore incorporating media educational practices in elementary classrooms requires a comprehensive and meaningful assessment and evaluation of the active engagement of students in critical thinking and creative expression based on the key concepts of media literacy. Teachers must consider that every individual student has different levels of knowledge and

learning capabilities. Therefore identifying individual's learning needs and establishing a set of criteria for self-assessment is vital for their sustained learning development.

Competencies can be defined in measuring skills, awareness, attitudes and behaviours of children in media education outcomes. Their perception implies the notions of critical viewing and skepticism regarding the attitude of questioning and examining the validity of any knowledge, facts, opinion, and accepted beliefs. They also highlighted the parents' role for encouraging their children to be critical about what they view on media.

Many teachers understand the importance of planning and establishing a practical media education framework starting from younger children in primary grades for sustained media educational practices in elementary schools. Storytelling and reading are effective types of media educational practice for primary grades in elementary schools. Children in primary grades must learn about nuts and bolts of media technology in terms of how media production in different formats are made. By the time they get to grade five, students can be engaged in more critical thinking, analysis, and creation of media productions. There is a great need for more investment and planning to facilitate media educational activities for younger children in elementary schools.

It is important to encourage teachers to improve their competencies in media education through professional development sessions and media courses at the universities' teacher education programs. They become catalyst teachers who can teach critical media literacy to other teachers in the school and make a great difference in the quality of critical media education in the elementary schools. Teachers must accept and be comfortable with the fact that students in this rapidly changing era are technologically savvy and learn how to use media technology faster than teachers. They need to be firm about their role as mentors and offer their explicit

guidance for students in learning to utilize their technical skills to proactively learn about the ethical, critical, and creative aspects of media education.

Children need to be assessed based on their meta-cognitive development and conceptual content of their creative expression, which is more important than the technical aspects of their production in media educational practices rather than the product as an outcome. The context and the process are a vehicle to reach the destination, which carry the learning outcome. Through collaboration and experiencing different methods of practicing critical media education and sharing among elementary school teachers, there is a great potential for developing a practical framework to engage students in cross-curricular activities and provide a set of criteria for their self-assessment in elementary classrooms.

## 5.2 Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

The issues raised in this dissertation have implications to open new possibilities for future research to examine the context of critical media education in Teacher Education Program. Prospects for a case study can contribute to the discussion of critical media education as an excellent opportunity for elementary teacher candidates to explore and develop necessary competencies in critical media literacy. The case study will explore how elementary teacher candidates prepare to apply and integrate the critical and creative aspects of critical media literacy across curriculum in elementary classrooms.

Such a case study could present critical media education to assist elementary teacher candidates in exploring their capacity for developing critical media literacy and cross-curricular competencies. The research direction will be defined through interaction with elementary teacher candidates as participants. It draws on models of empowering classroom-based research such as Participatory Action Research (PAR) to validate and give voice to teacher candidates'



experiences, challenges, and accomplishments through their practices in critical media education and development of teaching portfolio.

PAR provides a framework for formalizing and making this process more effectively. It is a method that involves the researcher in joining in with the activities of the group being studied. PAR is defined as a journey with “shifting questions and doubts, points of critical awareness, moments of celebration, and connections that demonstrate a deepening understanding of lived and transformed realities” (Willms, 1997, p. 11).

Developing critical thinking and creative producing in critical media educational practices will be natural complements to PAR through themes such as creativity, empowerment, and a continuous lifelong learning philosophy. PAR “aims at creating an environment in which participants give and get valid information, make free and informed choices (including the choice to participate), and generate internal commitment to the results of the inquiry” (Argyris and Schon, 1991, p. 86).

The subjects of this research can be recruited primarily among the elementary teacher candidates in Teacher Education Program at the university. These teacher candidates will attend critical media education workshops focusing on a variety of aspects of media production at different levels of training. As a researcher and co-participant, the researcher can assist other participants to investigate their own realities and take action because of this research. This research will require ethics review and approval because of the involvement of human participants in the media workshops.

The researcher might use participants’ own media production, the process of their production, their challenges, their accomplishments, and their self-assessment as sources of data. The researcher observes different conclusions arising from participants themselves to stimulate

her/his inquiry concerning how participants are addressed and have been addressed. The researcher can identify learning differences of participants to gather the data that can provide evidence of their having learned. The researcher will continuously assess through interviews how their style and vision changes in response to the challenges they face over a three-month period. The researcher can develop protocols for individual in-depth interviews and focus groups for generating sources of data based on the following areas of development:

1. Developing critical media literacy competencies including media production skills: awareness of the impact of media on youth culture, ability to analyze and interpret media messages, visual dialogue and communication, critical and creative thinking, pre-production, production, and post-production
2. Developing a teaching portfolio for critical media education: Unit plans, lesson plans, and teaching and learning resources

Methods for analyzing the data can be developed in the study. The emphasis will be on generating information and clear descriptions of teacher candidates' experiences during the course. The researcher will meet regularly to discuss with participants the findings and the write up of the research report.

### 5.3 Conclusions and Recommendations

This research has provided an opportunity to learn from elementary school teachers' perspectives on the successes and challenges associated with their efforts to implement media literacy into school curricula. It has also provided insights into the importance of cross-curricular integration of media educational practices in elementary classrooms. The results of this case study reveal that these teachers interpret media education not as an extra load, but as a cross-curricular theme in a holistic experience of teaching and learning process that promotes

critical thinking, creativity, and positive transformation for self and community. This process, according to teachers' perceptions, might stimulate students' critical thinking and creative expressions in an authentic, meaningful, and unified learning environment. Despite the current overload of curricula and factual knowledge-based assessment, these teachers expressed their confidence in the significant role of practicing critical reading/viewing and creative writing/producing in the classroom for students' cognitive development, for their academic advancement, and for their initiatives to become change agents in their circles of influence. Most teachers believed that despite how technologically savvy most children are, they are not necessarily media literate that they do not critically reflect, understand, and analyze media messages presented to them. Teachers also expressed their beliefs in teachers' significant role for providing an authentic teaching and learning environment that allows students to develop circles of influence and become agents of change by actively engaging in critical reflection and creative expression in their community of peers, friends and families.

Based on teachers' perspectives, although positive attempts were taken for integrating media education in subjects such as Social Studies and English Language Art, there are some overarching needs for successful integration of critical media education across curriculum in elementary classrooms. These overarching needs are: having more access to technology-based facilities; reducing teachers' stress and time constraints by having technical media specialist supports; having smaller class sizes in number of students for enhancement of interactivity, practicality, and productivity; having more professional development sessions for technical training and conceptual seminars in critical media education and technology; and having extensive conceptual and technical teaching resources for utilizing media educational practices in cross-curricular activities. This study recommends that providing these overarching needs will

serve as the catalyst, which empowers teachers to take a positive and active role, and enhance new forms of positive and effective communication between teachers, students, and parents; and supports cross-curricular integration and transformative learning in the elementary classrooms. This research also recommends incorporating critical media education in Teacher Education Programs for elementary teacher candidates at the universities. Integration of critical media education in the Teacher Education Programs is essential for elementary teacher candidates to increase their self-efficacy and reduce their stress and time constraints for teaching critical media literacy in the elementary classrooms. It helps them to become media literate and competent, and to provide a dynamic learning environment and set out a practical framework to incorporate critical media literacy education in cross-curricular activities in the elementary classrooms.

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## **Appendix A: Invitation Letter to Teachers**

August, 2011

Dear (*Name of Teacher*),

My name is Artin Lahiji. I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Interdisciplinary Graduate Program at the University of Saskatchewan. It is through this letter that I invite you to be a part of my dissertation research, which will enable me to complete the requirements for a Doctorate of Philosophy degree in the Interdisciplinary Graduate Program. The title of my research is: *Critical Media Education and Agency in the Classroom: Teachers' Perspectives on Digital Media Educational Practices in Elementary Schools*. The purpose of this case study is to explore the role of critical media educational practices for developing forms of agency in Saskatoon elementary classrooms.

In relation to traditional literacy that advocates the adoption of critical perspectives toward reading and writing, critical media literacy is an extension of the concept of literacy that promotes the development of critical reflection and creative engagement necessary to analyze, interpret, evaluate, and understand media messages (reading) as well as the ability to create media products (writing) in variety of contexts (Buckingham, 2003). The critical and creative process of media educational practice reflect in forms of images (still or motion pictures), music, sounds, voices, dialogues, texts, and ideas through understanding and appreciating the language of media enhanced by practical experience producing and utilizing that language. Critical

reflection is the process that learners identify the assumptions governing their actions, locate the sources of the assumptions, question the meaning of the assumptions, and develop alternative ways for their actions (Cranton, 1996). Through the process of critical reflection, learners are able to interpret and create new knowledge driven by their own experiences. This creative process makes learning relevant and builds a strong interdependent relationship between classroom and contemporary society.

This research is guided by the following questions:

Primary research question: What are elementary school teachers' understandings of critical media education and agency in the classroom? This primary research question seeks to determine the significance of the integration of critical media education in elementary school's curricula and to identify obstacles that prevent successful integration process. This research question has been shaped by an understanding of critical reflection and creative engagement in the classroom, which will be shown to have a direct correlation to the use of media educational practice.

Sub-questions: The following sub-questions will be used to inform the primary research question in three categories of contexts, processes, and outcomes. They highlight the in-depth understanding of critical media pedagogy as a theory of learning in media education and will inquire as to how the theory provides a dynamic framework for the approaches available to professional educators.

1- Contexts: What are the critical contexts of media educational practices that need to be better understood? Basic questions include: What is media education? What is critical agency in the

classroom? Where do media educational practices happen? Who are engaging in these practices? What kinds of supports are being provided? And how are these practices sustained?

2- Processes: What are the instructional processes in media educational practices that need to be better understood? Basic questions include: What is being taught about mass media in elementary schools? What is being taught about critical thinking and creative expression? How is it being taught? What are the obstacles and advantages of different methods of instruction? What are the possibilities and limitations in the process of media literacy integration in elementary schools' curricula?

3- Outcomes: What are the criteria for measuring competencies in media education outcomes? Basic questions include: What skills, attitudes or behaviours of children should be measured? What skills and knowledge do children already possess? What is the relationship between knowledge and attitude or behavioural outcomes? What are the ways of effectiveness of media educational practices for developing critical and creative agents of change in elementary classrooms?

For this study, I will conduct individual interviews with seven teachers. Each interview will be conducted for approximately one hour. Interview data will be expanded by a reflective journal written during the data collection process. Included documents are copies of semi-structured interview questions for teachers and copies of the consent form indicating the participants' rights and the ethical regulations related to this study. Written consent will be obtained from all participants before interviews. All participants will receive a typed copy of

their interviews transcript and then be asked to add, delete, or make any changes that they think will be more appropriate before returning their signed Data/Transcript Release Form (see attached form) to me.

This study will not expose any risk to the participants and fulfills the requirements for Below Minimal Risk in compliance with the Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) guideline at the University of Saskatchewan. All participants will be informed that their part in this study will be voluntary and they have right to withdraw from the study at any time without any obligations. Thus, any collected data related to him/her will be destroyed and will not be included in the study. As well, privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality for all participants, will be practiced throughout this study. Participants will be reminded of their rights before the start of each interview session. In compliance with the University of Saskatchewan guidelines, at the completion of the study, all documents relating to this research will be secured in the office of my dissertation supervisor, Dr. Terry Wotherspoon, at the University of Saskatchewan, for five years.

Enclosed are two copies of a written consent form for you. If you decide to accept the invitation to participate in this study, please sign and date consent forms. Return one copy of the signed and dated consent form to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope or send it through fax or email. Please keep one copy of the consent form for your own records.

The protocol of this research has been reviewed and approved by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board at the University of Saskatchewan on (*insert date*). For questions about the participants' rights and ethical conduct of research, please contact the University of Saskatchewan's Ethic Unit at (306) 966-2084.

I thank you for considering to participate in this study. If you have any questions in any area, please feel free to contact my supervisor or myself through the following contact information:

<p>Dr. Terry Wotherspoon, Supervisor</p> <p>Office: Arts 1020</p> <p>Phone: (306) 966-6925</p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:terry.wotherspoon@usask.ca">terry.wotherspoon@usask.ca</a>.</p> <p>Address: Department of Sociology, College of Art and Sciences, University of Saskatchewan 1019 - 9 Campus Drive Saskatoon, SK S7N 5A5</p>	<p>Artin Lahiji, Ph.D. Candidate</p> <p>Office: Education 3068</p> <p>Phone: (306) 244-2697</p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:artin.lahiji@usask.ca">artin.lahiji@usask.ca</a></p> <p>Address: 102 Adolph Crescent, Saskatoon, SK S7N 3J9</p>
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Sincerely,

Artin Lahiji

Ph.D. Candidate Researcher

## Appendix B: Individual Interview Questions for all Participants

1. Please tell me briefly about yourself and what you teach.
2. In your opinion, what does “*Tele Media*” practice in your school mean?
3. What is the role of critical media educational practices for developing forms of agency in Saskatoon elementary classrooms?
4. For better understanding the context of media educational practices, in your opinion, what is media education? What is critical agency in the classroom? Where do media educational practices happen? Who are engaging in these practices? What kinds of supports are being provided? And how are these practices sustained?
5. For better understanding the instructional processes in media educational practices, in your opinion, what is being taught about mass media in elementary schools? What is being taught about critical thinking and creative expression? How is it being taught? What are the obstacles and advantages of different methods of instruction? What are the possibilities and limitations in the process of media literacy integration in elementary schools’ curricula?
6. For better understanding the criteria for measuring competencies in media education outcomes, in your opinion, what skills, attitudes or behaviours of children should be

measured? What skills and knowledge do children already possess? What is the relationship between knowledge and attitude or behavioural outcomes? What are the ways of effectiveness of media educational practices for developing critical and creative agents of change in elementary classrooms?

7. What type of media educational practice do you perceive to be most beneficial to the elementary schools?

**Appendix C: Data/Transcript Release Form for all Participants**

In relation to the research study entitled, *Critical Media Education and Agency in the Classroom: Teachers' Perspectives on Digital Media Educational Practices in Elementary Schools*, I, \_\_\_\_\_, have reviewed the complete transcripts of the interview(s) with Artin Lahiji. I have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript(s) as appropriate. I acknowledge that the summary accurately reflects what I said in the individual interview with Artin Lahiji. I hereby authorize the release of this data to Artin Lahiji to be used in the manner described in the consent form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Researcher)



## **Appendix D: Consent Form for Teachers**

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a study entitled *Critical Media Education and Agency in the Classroom: Teachers' Perspectives on Digital Media Educational Practices in Elementary Schools*. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any questions you might have.

**Researcher:** Artin Lahiji, College of Graduate Studies and Research, Interdisciplinary Graduate Program, University of Saskatchewan, (306) 244-2697 (home), (306) 966-7681 (office), (306) 715-1505 (Cell Phone), [artin.lahiji@usask.ca](mailto:artin.lahiji@usask.ca).

**Purpose and Procedure:** The title of my research is: *Critical Media Education and Agency in the Classroom: Teachers' Perspectives on Digital Media Educational Practices in Elementary Schools*. The purpose of this case study is to explore the role of critical media educational practices for developing forms of agency in Saskatoon elementary classrooms. The following research questions direct the study:

**Primary research question:** What are elementary school teachers' understandings of critical media education and agency in the classroom?

The following three groups of sub-questions will be used to inform the primary research question in three categories of contexts, processes, and outcomes. They highlight the in-depth understanding of critical media pedagogy as a theory of learning in media education and will

inquire as to how the theory provides a dynamic framework for the approaches available to professional educators.

**Contexts:** What are the critical contexts of media educational practices that need to be better understood? Basic questions include: What is media education? What is critical agency in the classroom? Where do media educational practices happen? Who are engaging in these practices? What kinds of supports are being provided? And how are these practices sustained?

**Processes:** What are the instructional processes in media educational practices that need to be better understood? Basic questions include: What is being taught about mass media in elementary schools? What is being taught about critical thinking and creative expression? How is it being taught? What are the obstacles and advantages of different methods of instruction? What are the possibilities and limitations in the process of media literacy integration in elementary schools' curricula?

**Outcomes:** What are the criteria for measuring competencies in media education outcomes? Basic questions include: What skills, attitudes or behaviours of children should be measured? What skills and knowledge do children already possess? What is the relationship between knowledge and attitude or behavioural outcomes? What are the ways of effectiveness of media educational practices for developing critical and creative agents of change in elementary classrooms?

As part of data collection and in addition to the critical analysis of classical and contemporary literature, I will conduct semi-structured individual interviews with seven elementary school teachers who taught *Tele Media* educational practice in the Saskatchewan elementary school curriculum. The participants' ideas will be used as sources of data. Semi-structured interviews will last approximately one hour each.

After receiving written consent, I will contact you and arrange a convenient time and location for interviews. With your permission, I will tape the interview and later transcribe the interview. You will then be asked to review the transcripts to ensure that they adequately reflect what you said or meant to say. Depending upon the length of the transcript, the transcript review process will take anywhere from about 15 minutes to one hour.

### **Potential Risks**

This study fulfills the requirements for Below Minimal Risk based on the Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) guideline. Participants may answer only those questions with which they are comfortable. As a participant, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time with no obligations. If you wish to withdraw from the study, any data which you had provided would be destroyed. Measures will be taken to ensure the confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity of participants.

### **Storage of Data**

Throughout the study period, all researcher documents will be kept in a safe a secure place. At the completion of this study and in accordance with the University of Saskatchewan guidelines, research materials including transcripts/notes, taped recordings, field notes, and my reflective journal will be safeguarded for a period of five years at the University of

Saskatchewan under the care of my supervisor, Dr. Terry Wotherspoon. After five years, all research materials pertaining to this study will be destroyed.

### **Confidentiality**

The data collected from this study will be used to partially complete the requirements for the Doctorate of Philosophy degree in the Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies. The results of this study will be shared with the members of the Interdisciplinary Graduate Program at the University of Saskatchewan and will potentially be published in refereed academic journals and/or presented at the academic seminars and conferences. Pseudonyms will be used within the data when referring to names of participants and school for confidentiality.

### **Right to Withdrawal**

Participation within this study is voluntary. A participant may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time during the interview and before you will sign the Data/Transcript Release Form, without any obligations. However, your right to withdraw data from the study will apply before you sign the Data/Transcript Release Form. After this time, it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data. If a participant withdraws from the study, all data he/she has contributed will be destroyed upon request.

### **Questions**

If you have any questions concerning the study, ask me at any time. This study has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on (*insert date*). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may also be addressed to the Ethics Committee through the Ethics Office (966-2084). Upon the completion of the study, you may request a summary of findings.

## Consent to Participate

I have read and understood the description above. I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions, and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in this study, understanding that I may withdraw this consent at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

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(Name of Participant)

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(Date)

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(Signature of Participant)

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(Signature of Researcher)

I thank you for considering participation within this study. If you have any questions in any area, please feel free to contact my supervisor or myself through the following contact information:

<p>Dr. Terry Wotherspoon, Supervisor</p> <p>Office: Arts 1020</p> <p>Phone: (306) 966-6925</p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:terry.wotherspoon@usask.ca">terry.wotherspoon@usask.ca</a>.</p> <p>Address: Department of Sociology, College of Art and Sciences, University of Saskatchewan 1019 - 9 Campus Drive Saskatoon, SK S7N 5A5</p>	<p>Artin Lahiji, Ph.D. Candidate</p> <p>Office: Education 3068</p> <p>Phone: (306) 244-2697</p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:artin.lahiji@usask.ca">artin.lahiji@usask.ca</a></p> <p>Address: 102 Adolph Crescent, Saskatoon, SK S7N 3J9</p>
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Sincerely,

Artin Lahiji

Ph.D. Candidate Researcher

## **Appendix E: Consent Form for the Saskatoon Public Schools Division**

September 12, 2011

Dear (Name of Coordinator of Research and Measurement) of the Saskatoon Public Schools Division,

My name is Artin Lahiji. I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Interdisciplinary Graduate Program at the University of Saskatchewan. It is through this letter that I invite seven elementary school teachers who have been involved in *Tele Media* program in Saskatoon elementary public schools to be participants as part of my dissertation research, which will enable me to complete the requirements for a Doctorate of Philosophy degree in the Interdisciplinary Graduate Program. The title of my research is: Critical Media Education and Agency in the Classroom: Teachers' Perspectives on Digital Media Educational Practices in Elementary Schools. The purpose of this case study is to explore the role of critical media educational practices for developing forms of agency in Saskatoon elementary classrooms.

In relation to traditional literacy that advocates the adoption of critical perspectives toward reading and writing, critical media literacy is an extension of the concept of literacy that promotes the development of critical reflection and creative engagement necessary to analyze, interpret, evaluate, and understand media messages (reading) as well as the ability to create media products (writing) in variety of contexts (Buckingham, 2003). The critical and creative process of media educational practice reflect in forms of images (still or motion pictures), music,

sounds, voices, dialogues, texts, and ideas through understanding and appreciating the language of media enhanced by practical experience producing and utilizing that language. Critical reflection is the process that learners identify the assumptions governing their actions, locate the sources of the assumptions, question the meaning of the assumptions, and develop alternative ways for their actions (Cranton, 1996). Through the process of critical reflection, learners are able to interpret and create new knowledge driven by their own experiences. This creative process makes learning relevant and builds a strong interdependent relationship between classroom and contemporary society.

This research is guided by the following questions:

Primary research question: What are elementary school teachers' understandings of critical media education and agency in the classroom? This primary research question seeks to determine the significance of the integration of critical media education in elementary school's curricula and to identify obstacles that prevent successful integration process. This research question has been shaped by an understanding of critical reflection and creative engagement in the classroom, which will be shown to have a direct correlation to the use of media educational practice.

Sub-questions: The following sub-questions will be used to inform the primary research question in three categories of contexts, processes, and outcomes. They highlight the in-depth understanding of critical media pedagogy as a theory of learning in media education and will inquire as to how the theory provides a dynamic framework for the approaches available to professional educators.



1- Contexts: What are the critical contexts of media educational practices that need to be better understood? Basic questions include: What is media education? What is critical agency in the classroom? Where do media educational practices happen? Who are engaging in these practices? What kinds of supports are being provided? And how are these practices sustained?

2- Processes: What are the instructional processes in media educational practices that need to be better understood? Basic questions include: What is being taught about mass media in elementary schools? What is being taught about critical thinking and creative expression? How is it being taught? What are the obstacles and advantages of different methods of instruction? What are the possibilities and limitations in the process of media literacy integration in elementary schools' curricula?

3- Outcomes: What are the criteria for measuring competencies in media education outcomes? Basic questions include: What skills, attitudes or behaviours of children should be measured? What skills and knowledge do children already possess? What is the relationship between knowledge and attitude or behavioural outcomes? What are the ways of effectiveness of media educational practices for developing critical and creative agents of change in elementary classrooms?

Following ethics approval by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board at the University of Saskatchewan and the Saskatoon Public Schools Division, I will begin the process of selecting seven elementary school teachers who have been involved in *Tele Media* program in Saskatoon

elementary public schools. To ensure anonymity of teacher participants, I will supply the superintendents at the Saskatoon Public Schools Division with a recruitment letter to distribute to potential participants on my behalf. This letter will include information about the study and invite the potential participants to contact me if they are interested to participate in my study.

For this study, I will conduct individual interviews with seven teachers. Each interview will be conducted for approximately one hour. Interview data will be expanded by a reflective journal written during the data collection process. Included documents are copies of semi-structured interview questions for teachers and copies of the consent form indicating the participants' rights and the ethical regulations related to this study. Written consent will be obtained from all participants before interviews. All participants will receive a typed copy of their interviews transcript and then be asked to add, delete, or make any changes that they think will be more appropriate before returning their signed Data/Transcript Release Form (see attached form) to me.

This study will not expose any risk to the participants and fulfills the requirements for Below Minimal Risk in compliance with the Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) guideline at the University of Saskatchewan. All participants will be informed that their part in this study will be voluntary and they have right to withdraw from the study at any time without any obligations. Thus, any collected data related to him/her will be destroyed and will not be included in the study. As well, privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality for all participants, will be practiced throughout this study. Participants will be reminded of their rights before the start of each interview session. In compliance with the University of Saskatchewan guidelines, at the

completion of the study, all documents relating to this research will be secured in the office of my dissertation supervisor, Dr. Terry Wotherspoon, at the University of Saskatchewan, for five years.

Enclosed are two copies of a written consent form for your consideration. If you decide to approve this consent, please sign and date both consent forms. Return one consent form to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope. Please maintain one copy of the consent form for your records.

The protocol of this research has been reviewed and approved by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board at the University of Saskatchewan on (*insert date*). For questions about the participants' rights and ethical conduct of research, please contact the University of Saskatchewan's Ethic Unit at (306) 966-2084.

I thank you for supporting this study. If you have any questions in any area, please feel free to contact my supervisor or myself through the following contact information:

<p>Dr. Terry Wotherspoon, Supervisor</p> <p>Office: Arts 1020</p> <p>Phone: (306) 966-6925</p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:terry.wotherspoon@usask.ca">terry.wotherspoon@usask.ca</a>.</p> <p>Address: Department of Sociology, College of Art and Sciences, University of Saskatchewan 1019 - 9 Campus Drive Saskatoon, SK S7N 5A5</p>	<p>Artin Lahiji, Ph.D. Candidate</p> <p>Office: Education 3068</p> <p>Phone: (306) 244-2697</p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:artin.lahiji@usask.ca">artin.lahiji@usask.ca</a></p> <p>Address: 102 Adolph Crescent, Saskatoon, SK S7N 3J9</p>
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Sincerely,

Artin Lahiji

Ph.D. Candidate Researcher