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# **MEDIA EDUCATION IN FINNISH TEACHER EDUCATION**

A Case Study of Pre-Service Teacher Education Students

# ABSTRACT

Vallery Michael: Media Education in Finnish Teacher Education: A Case Study of Pre-Service Teacher Education Students  
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The highly digitalized and media saturated lives of people around the world has engendered the need for media education across every stratum of society. This media landscape has created some unique opportunities as well as challenges, thereby warranting the implementation and integration of media education. Arguably, the best place to begin introducing comprehensive and systematic media education is in the classroom, at the school level, and within the curricular scaffolding of the compulsory education system. Towards this end, The Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education was designed to include media education elements in the form of the transversal competencies of 'ICT Competence' and 'Multiliteracy'. The curricular requirement for the inclusion and assimilation of media education in comprehensive schools, combined with the aforementioned media landscape which children and youth inhabit, logically entail that teachers in Finland be prepared and equipped to teach about the media as well as with the media. Contrary to this, recent studies have shown that pre-service teachers in Finland do not receive adequate training and education in media education. This study seeks to elucidate this conundrum by investigating the presence of media education in the class teacher education programme at a local university in Finland from the perspective of pre-service teacher students. It will shed light on the understanding of media education among these pre-service teachers, their experiences and challenges with media education, their perceptions regarding their own media education competencies, as well as their needs and opinions relating to media education. In doing so, this study will also explore their willingness and preparedness to incorporate the transversal curricular components of ICT Competence and Multiliteracy into their future classrooms.

This thesis is positioned within the theoretical framework of media education theory and conceptualized within the Nordic approach to media education. It will also provide a conceptual model for media education which is based on the Nordic perspective. This is a collective case study employing in-depth qualitative interviews, and is approached through the lens of the interpretivist research paradigm. The findings of the study show that from the perspectives of teacher students, the presence of media education in the curriculum of teacher education is limited, undervalued, invisible, outdated, and shallow, among other things. This study reveals the need for the integration of media education into the teacher education curriculum as well as the need for further research in this area.

Keywords: Media Education, Media and Information Literacy, Multiliteracy, ICT Competence, Pre-Service Teacher Education Curriculum, Pre-Service Teacher Preparedness

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>I</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>II</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>2 CONCEPTUALIZING THE FIELD OF STUDY</b> .....	<b>10</b>
2.1 THE FINNISH CONTEXT.....	10
2.2 MEDIA EDUCATION THEORIES: WHAT IN THE WORLD IS MEDIA EDUCATION? .....	15
2.3 MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY.....	22
2.4 MULTILITERACY.....	25
2.5 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) COMPETENCE .....	26
2.6 RESEARCH QUESTION .....	27
<b>3 IMPLEMENTING THE STUDY</b> .....	<b>28</b>
3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN .....	28
3.2 DATA COLLECTION .....	31
3.3 DATA ANALYSIS.....	36
3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	41
3.5 LIMITATIONS.....	42
<b>4 FINDINGS</b> .....	<b>43</b>
4.1 PRESENTING THE FINDINGS.....	43
4.2 UNDERSTANDING .....	44
4.3 EXPERIENCES .....	48
4.4 CHALLENGES.....	53
4.5 COMPETENCE .....	57
4.6 NEEDS.....	60
4.7 OPINIONS .....	63
<b>5 DISCUSSION</b> .....	<b>69</b>
5.1 KEY FINDINGS OF THE STUDY .....	69
5.2 IMPLICATIONS OF THE KEY FINDINGS .....	71
<b>6 CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>72</b>
<b>7 EVALUATION OF THE STUDY</b> .....	<b>75</b>
7.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	75
7.2 RESEARCH DESIGN .....	76
7.3 RESEARCH METHODS .....	76
7.4 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION .....	79
7.5 PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS .....	82
7.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	83
7.7 COMPARISON TO OTHER RESEARCH.....	84
7.8 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND REFLECTION.....	84
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>85</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b> .....	<b>94</b>

# 1 INTRODUCTION

At the dawn of the year 2020, digital technology and internet connectivity are becoming increasingly pervasive<sup>1</sup> around the world, particularly in developed countries<sup>2</sup>, and are developing at a rate which would have seemed improbable a mere century ago. Across the globe, a rapidly growing number of people are using digital devices and online platforms and services (Clement, 2019; Miller, Washington, and Miller & Associates, 2015; Poushter, 2016). A significant part of the daily life of the average person involves digital and online activities (Christensen & Tufte, 2010). The digital landscape that we currently inhabit is dynamic, fluid, and constantly evolving (e.g. Christensen & Tufte, 2010). In order to stay informed, be conversant, fully participate, and thrive in this new reality, one needs to keep abreast of the latest developments, be in step with technology, and skillfully navigate this new media environment.

For the most part, children and young people are able to use digital and electronic media somewhat effortlessly (e.g. Lundgren, 2014). This does not come as a surprise, considering the fact that the children and youth of today were born after the advent of the digital age: into a post-Google digital world surrounded by electronic devices and worldwide connectivity, the likes of which their parents could only have dreamed of. This is especially true in the case of the Nordic countries, where most children and youth have inhabited digitally mediated cultures their entire lives (Kotilainen & Arnolds-Granlund 2010). Finland, for example, is “an internet-intensive country where children have grown up as digital natives” Kupiainen, Suoninen & Nikunen (2011, p. 51). Children in Finland are becoming increasingly immersed in this growing digital culture and are using digital technology and platforms frequently and fluidly, as if it were second nature to them (Kupiainen, et. al., 2011). National statistics as well as publications like the ‘Children’s Media Barometer’ show that children aged 7 to 11 years spend a staggering amount of time online and on their devices (Hirvonen, 2011). In fact, some studies claim that children globally are spending more time engaged in electronic media than they are in formal learning at school (Lundgren, 2014).

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<sup>1</sup> Individuals Using the Internet: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS>

Internet Usage Worldwide - Statistics & Facts: <https://www.statista.com/topics/1145/internet-usage-worldwide/>

Across 39 Countries, Three-Quarters Say They Use the Internet: <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2018/06/19/across-39-countries-three-quarters-say-they-use-the-internet/>

<sup>2</sup> Internet Access Growing Worldwide but Remains Higher in Advanced Economies:

<https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2016/02/22/internet-access-growing-worldwide-but-remains-higher-in-advanced-economies/>

This media saturated childhood and environment has some serious implications and has created unique complexities in the classroom. Among them is the growing need for students to learn how to use media in a manner which is safe, responsible, constructive, and critical. The rise in this pervasive use of media has engendered an urgent and essential need for an equal rise in media education (as put forward by Christensen & Tufte, 2010, Erstad, 1997, and Schofield, 2015), particularly from a critical perspective (e.g. Ligoeki, 2017). For example, the proliferation of misinformation, online misconduct, digital crimes, and various other perceived negative consequences of digital online media have created an acute need for critical media education in the areas of media and information literacy as well as information and communication technology (e.g. Gallagher, 2014). As Sauerteig, Cervera Gutierrez, Toven-Lindsey & Dahl (2019) explain:

“In the context of this unprecedented access to flows of news and information, the networked nature of communications, and the proliferation of biased and unchecked online materials, young people need support and guidance to develop high levels of information and media literacies.”

Furthermore, the new opportunities made possible by this current media landscape have also resulted in a vital need for media education. The participatory features of this new media ecosystem have created opportunities for active participation, creative expression, civic expression, community building, activism, and digital citizenship, among other things (see also Kotilainen & Arnolds-Granlund, 2010; Kotilainen & Rantala, 2010; Kupiainen, 2019; Uusitalo, 2010). This, in turn, has effectuated the need for media education on how to fully and effectively use media in a positive, constructive, and creative way in order to make the most of these opportunities and affordances (see also Kupiainen, 2019; Kupiainen & Sintonen, 2010; Pernisco, 2014). Consequently, media education today is no longer a peripheral indulgence but a basic need and human right (Pathak-Shelat, 2013; see also Kotilainen & Arnolds-Granlund, 2010; Kotilainen & Pathak-Shelat, 2015; Kupiainen, 2019).

Another consequence of the media saturated lives of children and youth is the phenomenon whereby teachers are beginning to encounter students who are more familiar with, and adept at, digital media and information and communication technology (ICT) than they themselves are (Hoechsmann & Poyntz, 2012, p.145). Hoechsmann and Poyntz refer to this phenomenon as ‘Natives vs Aliens’ in a digital sense, drawing from the works of Green and Begum (1993) as well as Prensky (2001). Lundgren (2014), for example, claims that children are becoming far better at using social and mobile media than their parents and teachers, and that this skill gap is only widening. However, this does not necessarily mean that children and young people have a deep understanding of the various aspects and functions of media; especially when it comes to understanding and using media from a critical perspective (Christensen & Tufte, 2010). This, therefore, “is where the need for media education

becomes real, not least the need for teachers to have the relevant competences” (Tuftte et.al. 2005, as cited in Christensen & Tuftte 2010, p. 119).

The statistics and research above establish a fundamental need for media education. Consequently, it is critical that education systems are able to keep pace with and support this need. After all, the most important purpose of any education system is to educate, equip, and prepare its students for the world they live in; and in this day and age that world is one that is digital, networked, and media saturated. As such, it is vital for educators to teach children how to critically navigate this networked media landscape through media education. The Finnish government has recognized this need and sought to address it through curriculum initiatives at a national level. Finland has long been a global forerunner when it comes to education and media literacies (e.g. Kupiainen, 2019). Ever since this small Nordic country began dominating the top of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)<sup>3</sup> list, its education system has been widely praised, studied, and even exported abroad.

A notable aspect of Finnish education is the commendable integration of media education in schools via a comprehensive curriculum and governmental policy support<sup>4</sup>. The Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education of 2014 (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2016) specifically mentions media education elements in the form of Multiliteracy (T4)<sup>5</sup> and ICT Competence (T5)<sup>6</sup> and recommends the teaching and integrating of both in the classroom. In other words, integrating these elements of media education into teaching is a curriculum requirement at all grade levels of compulsory education in Finland. It then follows, as a matter of logic, that teachers in Finland are trained to be able to accomplish this and thus fulfill the curricular expectations. If they are required to give some form of media education to their students, they should also receive media education in order to be equipped for that task. Therefore, it is a reasonable expectation that an appropriate amount of training in media education has been, and is being, given to teacher students to prepare them for the demands of the curriculum.

Contrary to this, a recent study by Salomaa, Palsa & Malinen (2017) indicates that this is not necessarily the case. The study titled ‘Opettajaopiskelijat ja Mediakasvatus 2017’ (Teacher Students and Media Education 2017) involved participants from class teacher education, subject teacher education, and early childhood education programmes. It revealed that media education is severely lacking amongst Finnish teacher education students and that most future teachers do not feel adequately prepared to meet the needs of their students and the requirements of the curriculum.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/pisa>

<sup>4</sup> Good Media Literacy (National Policy Guidelines 2013–2016): <http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/75280/OKM13.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Transversal Competence Number 4

<sup>6</sup> Transversal Competence Number 5

According to the study, approximately 48% of all teacher students in Finland (class, subject, and early childhood education) do not get adequate training in media education (Salomaa, Palsa, Malinen, 2017, p.51). That means that in this country, where there is a clear curricular requirement at the national level to teach multiliteracy and ICT skills, almost half of those studying to become teachers are not being sufficiently trained for the task of teaching media education. That is an incogitable and unacceptable statistic which needs to change. Considering the obligatory nature of the media education elements in the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education of 2014 (FNCC14)<sup>7</sup>, it is not unreasonable to expect that teachers are trained and prepared to teach and integrate media education in the classroom. The training of teachers is a critical component of any education system, and is key to the feasibility and success of any curricular endeavor. Teachers should be trained and equipped for the tasks necessitated by the demands of the curriculums they operate within.

This scenario revealed by Salomaa et. al. (2017) is not a new one in Finland, as evidenced by Kotilainen (2001), nor is it a new one globally (Buckingham, 2003). Buckingham, for instance, pointed out almost two decades ago that “far too few teachers are being given the specialist training they need”. It is unfortunate that the situation has not changed much since, and “remains a challenge for teacher education programmes worldwide” (Instefjord, 2015, p.156). Expecting teachers to teach something they are not trained to teach is unfair. If the curriculum requires that teachers incorporate media education into classroom pedagogy, then it should also be demanded that media education be incorporated into the curriculum and pedagogy of teacher education. Despite this, based on past research, it seems that media education in the curriculum of teacher education in Finland is limited, inadequate, and only vaguely present (Salomaa et. al., 2017; Mertala & Pääjärvi, 2015; Ruokamo, Kotilainen, Kupiainen & Maasilta, 2016).

Media education research in itself is still an emerging field of study in Finland (Pekkala, Pääjärvi, Palsa, Korva & Löfgren, 2013) and research into the presence of media education in the curriculum of teacher education in Finland is also limited, especially when it comes to qualitative research in English. While there are many research publications related to education, teacher education, and the curriculum of teacher education in Finland, there is not much that can be found on the subject of media education in the curriculum of teacher education. What little exists is mostly written and published in the Finnish language, with only a handful of publications in English. Out of these, none were in-depth qualitative studies done from the perspective of teacher education students. This further confirmed the need to explore this particular aspect of media education. This, therefore,

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<sup>7</sup> My own abbreviation



is the research space which this study will seek to occupy and the conundrum which it will seek to shed light on, examine, understand, and propose possible solutions for.

This study aims to investigate and illuminate how media education is present in the curriculum of teacher education in Finland, specifically from the perspectives of pre-service teacher students. The study is conducted within the interpretivist paradigm and framework of inquiry, as defined by Mertens (2005). It will attempt to fill the gap in current qualitative research relating to media education in the pre-service teacher education curriculum. It will do so by examining media education in the teacher education curriculum from the understanding, experiences, and points of view of pre-service teacher students through a qualitative study involving in-depth interviews. This study will also establish a need for media education in teacher education as a fundamental requirement for both the fulfillment of the FNCC14 as well as the demands of the digital world we live in. It is driven by the idea that when educators are expected, required, or mandated, to teach a certain subject or skill, they should also be trained, prepared, and equipped with the necessary knowledge and tools to teach that subject or skill. Subsequently, it is hoped that the study will demonstrate a need for change at a policy level pertaining to how future Finnish teachers are trained with regards to media education. The chapters that follow will discuss the theoretical framework and concepts, methodology, findings, discussion, and conclusions pertaining to the study, followed by an evaluation of the study itself.

## 2 CONCEPTUALIZING THE FIELD OF STUDY

This chapter details the contextual background of the study and presents the theoretical and conceptual frameworks within which the study is framed. It examines and discusses the media education theory within which this study is positioned. It will expound the aspects of media education pertaining to the study and present a conceptual framework of media education.

### *2.1 The Finnish Context*

It is important to understand the geographical and socio-cultural context of the study because it pertains directly to the education system and curriculum of the country within which the study was conducted. This section outlines the Finnish context and provides some necessary information on Finland, the Finnish education system, and the Finnish national curriculum; all from a media education perspective.

Finland is a Nordic country located in northern Europe, between Sweden and Russia, with a population of approximately 5.5 million<sup>8</sup> people. There are 13 universities and 23 universities of applied sciences<sup>9</sup> in Finland, with approximately 300,000<sup>10</sup> students enrolled in these. According to Kotilainen & Pathak-Shelat (2015, p.149), Finland has “very high human development, good gender equality, quite good economic equality, and good press freedom”. These elements, along with strong social welfare policies centered around equality, are contributing factors to the overall wellbeing of the population as well as the success of the Finnish education system.

The Finnish education system has been touted as one of the best in the world, with Finnish school students scoring relatively well on an international scale (Niemi, Toom & Kallioniemi, 2016; Simola, 2005; Simola, 2015; OECD 2011, 2015, 2018). Finnish Basic Education (also known as Finnish Comprehensive Schooling) is compulsory for everyone between the age of 7 and 16. Finnish comprehensive school begins in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade (when most children are 7 years old) and ends in the 9<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> (Statistics Finland) [https://www.stat.fi/til/vrm\\_en.html](https://www.stat.fi/til/vrm_en.html)

<sup>9</sup> (Education Statistics of Finland) <https://vipunen.fi/en-gb/>

<sup>10</sup> (Statistics Finland): [https://www.stat.fi/tup/suoluk/suoluk\\_koulutus\\_en.html](https://www.stat.fi/tup/suoluk/suoluk_koulutus_en.html)

grade (when most students are 16 years old). According to Tirri (2014, p.600), one reason for Finland's success is "the Finnish government's principle of 'equal opportunities and high-quality education for all'". Education in Finland is free for everyone, at all levels, from pre-primary to the tertiary level<sup>11</sup>.

The Finnish education system has a long history with media education, beginning from the 1960's (Kupiainen, Sintonen & Suoranta, 2008). Vesterinen (2011, p. 37) for example, discusses how media education is present in the Finnish school system and "the teaching–studying–learning (TSL) processes that take place in the school context". According to Kupiainen (2011), media literacy in Finland is not taught as a subject in Finnish schools but instead it is a cross curricular entity which is integrated into other subjects. He argues that this has created some problems because it means that the implementation and practices of media literacy education are dependent on individual teachers and schools; thereby resulting in significant disparities among schools. This is an important revelation because it debunks the popular belief of great equality in Finnish education.

Media education in Finland is a matter of policy and has had an official presence in the Finnish National Core Curriculum since 2004 (Arnolds-Granlund, 2010). The Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education of 2014 (Opetushallitus, 2016) which came into effect in 2016 describes seven transversal competencies, some of which include media education elements. According to Halinen, Harmanen & Mattila (2015, p.140), the concept of transversal competence "refers to an entity consisting of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and will". The media education elements listed as transversal competencies in the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education of 2014 (FNCC14) are 'Multiliteracy'<sup>12</sup> and 'ICT Competence'<sup>13</sup>. While the curriculum does not explicitly use the term 'media education', it could be argued that media education is implicitly present in the curriculum, in the form of the aforementioned terms 'multiliteracy' and 'ICT competence'. Together, the conceptualizations of multiliteracy and ICT competence in the FNCC14 contributed to the framework within which this study was built and influenced the drafting of the interview questions, the discourse during the interviews, as well as the analysis and findings.

### Media Education Semantics: Lost in Translation?

The fact that this study was conducted and written in English, yet is based in Finland and concerns Finnish education, society, and policy, must be acknowledged. The semantic aspects relating to media education in the Finnish context and the translation factor between Finnish and English require

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.oph.fi/download/146428\\_Finnish\\_Education\\_in\\_a\\_Nutshell.pdf](https://www.oph.fi/download/146428_Finnish_Education_in_a_Nutshell.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Transversal Competence Number 4 (T4) in the Finnish National Core Curriculum 2014

<sup>13</sup> Transversal Competence Number 5 (T5) in the Finnish National Core Curriculum 2014

consideration. Media education is called ‘mediakasvatus’ in Finnish. This translates directly as ‘media upbringing’ in English. The use of the term ‘mediakasvatus’ or ‘media upbringing’ is very natural in the Finnish language (Arnolds-Granlund, 2010, p. 47). The teacher education programme in Finland, for example, is called ‘kasvatustiede’ or ‘the science of upbringing’. Finnish universities offer these programmes in faculties which are usually called ‘Kasvatustieteiden tiedekunta’<sup>14</sup> or ‘faculty of upbringing science’ (which would be termed ‘faculty of education’ in English). Media education is semantically present in Finnish education as ‘mediakasvatus’. Therefore, in the context of this study, ‘mediakasvatus’ translates wholly into ‘media education’. Arnolds-Granlund (2010, p.45) explains that in the Finnish tradition of education, media education is close to and shares roots with ‘media pedagogy’, a term which “could be understood as upbringing, teaching, and learning where the media is present in some form”. She elaborates that ‘media pedagogy’ and ‘media education’ are often used interchangeably in Finland and refer to “the science of upbringing, teaching, and learning about, from, and by the means of media...” (Arnolds-Granlund 2010, p.46).

Media literacy in Finnish is called ‘medialukutaito’, which translates directly as ‘media reading skill’. According to Arnolds-Granlund (2010, p.48), ‘medialukutaito’ in the Finnish context is “media literacy as a using ability”. She also describes the concept of ‘mediataito’ (which translates as media skill), referring to some Finnish scholars who suggest that it is “a more activity connoting alternative” to the concept of media literacy as a reading ability. She explains that according to Tella et al. (2001) and Tella & Ruokamo (2005), ‘mediataito’ encapsulates more than just technical abilities, and that it also “involves verbal, cultural, communicative, social, educational, ethical, and aesthetic capabilities” (Arnolds-Granlund, 2010, p.50). In other words, as some Finnish scholars theorize, the term ‘media skill’ is a form of media literacy in the Finnish context.

In the Finnish context, multiliteracy is called ‘monilukutaito’ (which translates directly as ‘multi reading skill’). ICT in Finnish is ‘tieto- ja viestintäteknikka’, which means information (or knowledge) and communication technology. In other words, ICT in Finnish is the same as ICT in English. ICT competence in Finnish is ‘tieto- ja viestintäteknikka osaaminen’ (which translates directly as ICT skill, ability, or competence). Multiliteracy and ICT Competence are important terms in the Finnish context because they are the two elements of media education included in the FNCC14.

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<sup>14</sup> See for example, the website of the Faculty of Education at Tampere University at: <https://www.tuni.fi/fi/tutustu-meihin/kasvatustieteiden- ja-kulttuurin-tiedekunta>

## Pre-Service Teacher Education in Finland

The United Nations (UN) defines pre-service teacher training as programmes which “are recognised and organised, private and public educational programmes designed to train future teachers to formally enter the profession at a specified level of education.”<sup>15</sup> Pre-service, in the context of this study, is a term used to describe students in the teacher education programme who have not yet graduated nor entered full time employment as teachers. These students may have had some form of teaching experience in schools as part of their practical training in the teacher education programme. However, they are still students themselves, and have not completed their teacher education studies. The term ‘pre-service’ is used in this study to avoid confusion by distinguishing between this group of people and qualified teachers in official employment. This is because qualified and employed teachers also undergo occasional training, which could be termed ‘in-service’ teacher education.

Teacher education in Finland is taught on eleven campuses across eight universities which are spread throughout Finland and cover all geographical regions of the country (Malinen, Väisänen & Savolainen, 2012, p. 569). Finnish teacher education is divided into class teacher education and subject teacher education, corresponding to the way school systems are structured. In this study, the programme which is being investigated is the class teacher education programme.

The teacher education curriculum refers to the academic content of the programme of teacher education at the institution of higher learning in which this study was conducted. More specifically, it refers to the class teacher education curriculum of 2017-2019, as detailed in the archived curricular guide of the former University of Tampere<sup>16</sup>. The definition of ‘teacher education curriculum’ in this study is framed along the lines of Kelly’s (2004) theory of curriculum. Kelly explains that it should be made clear from the beginning whether the use of the term ‘curriculum’ refers to “the content of a particular subject or area of study” or “the total programme of an educational institution” (Kelly, 2004, p.4). In this study, the term refers to the programme of class teacher education at Tampere University in its entirety, and not the individual subject areas. This is very much in accordance with Kelly’s view that totality should be the main focus when it comes to the term curriculum.

According to Malinen, Väisänen & Savolainen (2012), while Finnish universities have autonomy in determining their curriculum, the contents, objectives, and minimum credits required are legislated at the national level (see also Kansanen, 2003). They elaborate that “with the European-wide Bologna process, teacher education in Finland changed into a system where a three-year bachelor’s degree and a two-year master’s degree in appropriate subjects will qualify teachers to teach

<sup>15</sup> <http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/pre-service-teacher-training>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www10.uta.fi/opas/koulutus.htm?opsId=161&uiLang=en&lang=en&lvv=2018&kouluId=396>

in primary and secondary schools” (Malinen, 2012, p. 573; see also Niemi & Jakku-Sihvonen, 2011). At Tampere University, the minimum credit requirement to graduate with a bachelor’s degree in teacher education is 180 credits while a master’s degree requires 120 credits<sup>17</sup>.

### Media Education in Pre-Service Teacher Education in Finland

Ruokamo, Kotilainen, Kupiainen & Maasilta (2016) claim that while media education in pre-service teacher education in Finland is increasing, there are challenges in the teacher education curriculum when it comes to the presence of media education. Citing Korhonen & Rantala (2007), they explain that media education in teacher education is “fragmented”, “threaded and limited”, and is focused on IT based media competencies (Ruokamo et. al., 2016, p.5). They claim that media education needed to be “found” in the curriculum, and is only one optional minor subject and content area among many. This threaded and limited media education which needs to be found is something that surfaced during the interviews for this study and will be further discussed in the findings section of this thesis. Ruokamo et. al. (2016, p.5) reveal that at the University of Tampere, the obligatory multidisciplinary studies for teacher education students in their first year of study include “a three-credit course on media culture and media education” called Visual and Media Cultures, which “includes a two-credit period on visual cultures”. Nonetheless, Kupiainen (2012, p. 337) claims that while “teacher training in Finland is of high quality and education studies aim at a master’s degree, it is still possible to graduate without having completed a course in media literacy education.” This claim is definitely thought provoking and requires consideration, especially in the context of this study.

A further examination of the University of Tampere’s Curriculum Guide (2018-2019)<sup>18</sup> for more information revealed that there are three courses that can be categorized as media education courses in the 2018-2019 curriculum. They are ‘Introduction to Computing’ (3 credits), ‘Media Education, Participation and Active Citizenship’ (5 credits), and ‘Media and Visual Cultures’ (5 credits). ‘Introduction to Computing’ and ‘Media and Visual Cultures’ are compulsory, with the former listed as a general studies course. However, it is vital to note here that the university has recently undergone some major restructuring and rebranding. It is now called Tampere University and the webpages of the university are hosted at a different site. There are also some minor changes to the curriculum of teacher education under the banner of the new university. There are, once again, three courses that can be classified under media education in the curriculum guide for the academic year 2019-2020<sup>19</sup>. These are ‘Introduction to Computing’ (1-3 credits), ‘Media Education and Active

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.tuni.fi/studentsguide/curriculum/educations/otm-22a8b2d1-d614-4046-a2d8-1fcb5b6d33f9?year=2019>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www10.uta.fi/opas/tutkintoOhjelma.htm?rid=14510&uiLang=en&lang=en&lvv=2018>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.tuni.fi/studentsguide/curriculum/educations/otm-22a8b2d1-d614-4046-a2d8-1fcb5b6d33f9?year=2019>

Citizenship’ (5 credits), and ‘Foundations of Game-Based Learning’ (5 credits). The noteworthy changes in the new curriculum are the exclusion of the word “Participation” from the ‘Media Education and Active Citizenship’ course, the introduction of the game-based learning course ‘Foundations of Game-Based Learning’, and the apparent absence of the ‘Media and Visual Cultures’ course. Ironically, this was the one course which most of the interview participants remembered when asked about media education courses they have taken. This will be discussed further in the chapter on findings. ‘Introduction to Computing’, which could be considered an ICT competence course, appears to be the only compulsory course in the new curriculum for teacher education.

In conclusion, there are only a few media education courses offered in the teacher education programme at the University of Tampere, amounting to a mere total of three courses which can be identified as media education courses, both in the old and new curriculum. These courses were only found at the bachelor level programme and none were in the curriculum for the master’s programme. This decidedly warrants further study. Understandably, the bulk of the courses offered are related to educational studies and multidisciplinary studies. The presence of media education as an integrated, transversal, and multidisciplinary competence area within other courses is as yet unknown and this is something which this study hopes to illuminate.

## ***2.2 Media Education Theories: What in the World is Media Education?***

In beginning to conceptualize media education, it is vital to define the key word ‘media’ within the term. Media in the context of this study refers to a widely encompassing range of media. These include, but are not restricted to, electronic media, analog and digital media, film, radio, and interactive media. This broad definition of media is concurrent with that of Buckingham (2003), Christensen & Tufte (2010), and Potter (2004). In defining the term ‘media’, Braesel & Karg (2018) grouped media into four categories: print, visual, sound, and digital. They also distinguished between non-electronic print media and electronic non- print media. According to them, electronic non- print media includes radio, cinema, television, computers, video games, the internet, recorded music, cell phones and e-books. All media content is a form of ‘text’, and contains cumulative, manifest, and latent messages (Silverblatt, Ayudhya & Jenkins, 2014). It is a conscious theoretical stance in this thesis to not ‘insulate’ (McDougall, 2014) the various forms of media. However, because this study is based on the FNCC14 and its components of ICT competence and Multiliteracy, the focus will be on electronic and digital media. Therefore, whenever media is mentioned in this thesis, it refers to the electronic and digital categories of media: visual, audio, and interactive; thus, covering media forms such as electronic and mobile devices, software, applications, and all online media.

In its simplest form, media education is the pedagogical process of teaching and learning about, with, and through the media (Christensen & Tufte, 2010). A United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) document published in 2009 titled ‘Mapping Media Education Policies in the World: Visions, Programmes and Challenges’ describes media education from the perspective of its functions, as follows:

“Media education provides the critical knowledge and the analytical tools that empower media audiences to function as autonomous and rational citizens, enabling them to make informed use of the media. Media education, which is an important part of civic education, helps to make people well-informed and responsible citizens, aware of their rights and duties” (Khan, 2009, p.9)

The document also mentions the fact that some scholars have included media education as part of the wide reaching and fundamental Universal Right to Education<sup>20</sup> which is enshrined in article 26 of the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948<sup>21</sup> (Scheuer, 2009). These are excellent definitions of media education and an effective way of describing the term, albeit in a simplified manner. At the very least, this is a good starting point from which to build an understanding of what the term ‘media education’ actually represents.

The concept of media education is broad-ranging and multifaceted. According to the experts, media education is a field of study which operates across a number of fields, with borders which are not distinct walls but blurred lines. For example, Pekkala et. al. (2013, p.37) describe media education as an “interdisciplinary” as well as “multidisciplinary” area of research. Similarly, Christensen & Tufte (2010, p.113) use the term “cross-disciplinary” when defining media education. Pekkala et. al. refer to the research reality of media education being dispersed through, and interwoven within, various fields of study as a challenge in categorizing research concerning media education in Finland.

Apart from the variations in conceptualization resulting from the fact that media education is both an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary field, there are also socio-geographical factors which influence the conceptualization of media education. Kupiainen (2018, pp. 2-5) describes the nuances of the concept of media education across a number of regions and explains that media studies and education theories “emphasize media education from different perspectives”. Of these examples, two are relevant to this study: the British model and the Nordic model.

## The British Model of Media Education

The sage of media education theory, David Buckingham, defines media education as “the process of teaching and learning about the media” (2003, p.4). He is very clear, however, that this definition of media education concerns only teaching and learning “*about* the media”; explicitly stating that this

<sup>20</sup> UNESCO Right to Education: <https://en.unesco.org/themes/right-to-education>

<sup>21</sup> UN Declaration of Human Rights: <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>



should not be misconstrued and confused with the practice of teaching “*through* or *with* the media” (2003, p.4). This view of media education is widely regarded as the British model of media education.

Originally, this was the central theoretical framework and lens of media education theory through which this study was to be constructed. However, having gone through the research process, and especially the interviews with the participants, it became increasingly apparent that a shift in perspective and a rethinking of this theoretical stance was necessary. Thus, I began to reevaluate my previously held view of media education theory as well as reconsider and revise the theoretical framework I was working within. The end result was a paradigm shift triggered by my own research.

Having embarked on this study, Buckingham’s definition of media education now appears to be somewhat restricting in a number of ways. It does not reflect what I have come to understand about media education, in the entirety of what the concept means and in the context this study. The fact that he limits media education to only teaching and learning ‘about’ the media, thus excluding teaching and learning ‘through and with’ the media, is problematic for this study because it excludes the use of ICT in teaching as a form of media education.

Also problematic in Buckingham’s media education theory is the somewhat one-sided focus on young people. Buckingham is not alone in this approach to media education, as it seems to be a common thread among other media education experts and researchers. I began to wonder, as a not-so-young person myself who is learning about media education (and learning not only *about* but *with* and *through* the media), where is the space in the theoretical framework for people like me? While this study focuses on teacher students who are presumably relatively young (and will be going on to teach children and young people), some of them are older adults who could very likely be excluded from the limiting category of ‘young people’ or ‘youth’. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, due to the current media landscape, media education has become a critical element of social and civic education; and one which should encompass all age groups, young and old alike. In considering all these factors, it became clear that a broader and more inclusive theory of media education within which to frame this study was needed. The search for a broader and more inclusive theoretical framework led to a reconsidering of the works of other media education scholars, specifically those from the Nordic region.

## The Nordic Model of Media Education

The Nordic region is an area of northern Europe which comprises the countries of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and the Åland Islands<sup>22</sup>. It is essential to

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.norden.org/en/information/facts-about-nordic-countries>

emphasize that this thesis is positioned in a Nordic context and is heavily influenced by the Nordic perspective on media education, not only because of geographical location, but also as a result of a conceptual stance. When it comes to media education, developments in the Nordic countries are largely similar to those in other developed countries. However, the Nordic region has a uniquely strong position when it comes to the broad availability and use of media and media education resources as well as a long history of collaboration between its countries (Lundgren, 2014). The educational systems in the Nordic region are also quite different from those in other parts of the world, with “a much stronger tradition of project-based learning, a strong emphasis on equal possibilities and a high access to media” (Erstad, 2010, p. 20). This, along with the social structures and welfare society models which are similar throughout all Nordic countries (Erstad, 2010), makes it a unique part of the world in terms of media education.

The Nordic countries have their own definition of media education; one which “combines learning and teaching in different contexts and *with* and *about* the media” Kupiainen (2018, p.3). This is known as the Nordic model of media education. The Nordic model is one that includes teaching and learning about and with the media (Erstad, 1997; Christensen & Tufte, 2010; Lundgren, 2014; and Schofield, 2015). This perspective of media education is one which will better inform this research and provide a more suitable scaffolding and framework for the data. Christensen & Tufte (2010, p. 113) define media education as teaching and learning about, with, and through the media, and underscore the significance of “a broad *media and information education approach* that would give the children and young people competences that enable them to communicate, search for information, and use different media in different contexts”. They argue that this form of media education “should be developed as a cross-disciplinary dimension in the educational system” (Christensen & Tufte, 2010, p.113) This is an accurate description of media education as conceptualized in this thesis.

Drawing from the works of Erstad (1997, 2010a) and Vettenranta (2004), Schofield argues that media education is a field which includes research as well as teaching; defining media education as a “research and educational field operating in the interface between media culture, school culture and children’s and youth culture” (2015, p.12). Vesterinen (2011), in his approach to media education, gives equal consideration to the separate semantic components of the term ‘media education’. In doing so, he approaches media education from the theoretical aspects of media and the theoretical aspects of education, and explores the definition of media education in relation to both media literacy and education. According to Vesterinen, the media-based and education-based approach to media education encompasses both the ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions; which ultimately results in the teaching about the media as well as with and through the media.

Media education in this thesis is based on the four main concepts of agency, reflection, collaboration, and culture, as proposed by Kupiainen & Sintonen (2010, p.66), which they describe as follows:

“The idea of agency entails that each learner takes more control over his or her own mental activity. Reflection focuses on understanding what is happening, what the learner is actually learning. The third idea involves sharing one’s thoughts with others, and the idea of culture involves understanding the context and link between ‘real’ life, art, and science.”

They explain that the practical application of media education and its connection to daily life and experiences “can be found in both the knowledge and the skills taught as well as in the experiences acquired” (2010, p.66). This perspective denotes that media education can be measured not just by the clear yardsticks of skills and knowledge but also by the more abstract concept of experience.

Kupiainen & Sintonen (2010, p.66) recommend that media education be developed in a manner which “enables teaching to be organized in a way that enhances diversity with an understanding of those being educated as individual learners and thinkers with different biological and psychological faculties.” While they do not specify what they mean by “different biological and psychological faculties”, one could venture to propose that biological and psychological diversity should include diversity of age. This, therefore, is the bridge between the majority of youth-focused media education theory and research of the past couple of decades and this thesis; and it all comes down to one word: diversity. Media education as it is conceptualized in this study is an inclusive and diverse media education which can, and should be, applicable to people of all ages. Age should not be a defining nor dividing factor in media education practice and media education should not be a purely youth-centric conceptual domain (cf. Buckingham, 2003; Hagen, 2010; Kotilainen & Rantala, 2010). In this post-truth, media saturated world of filter bubbles, misinformation, fake news, and deep fakes, it is even more crucial for media education to be a pedagogic and civic domain for all, irrespective of age.

### How Media Education is Conceptualized in this Study

In view of the literature and theories presented in this chapter, media education within the context of this thesis is conceptualized as follows. Media education is the practice of teaching and learning about the media, from the media, and with and by the means of the media (Buckingham, 2003; Erstad 1997 and 2006, as cited in Arnolds-Granlund, 2010; Christensen & Tufte, 2010). Media education is multidisciplinary and cross-disciplinary (e.g. Pekkala et. al., 2013; Christensen & Tufte, 2010). It is a broad concept which includes within it the concepts of media and information literacy, multiliteracy,

and ICT competence. It is both descriptive<sup>23</sup> and normative<sup>24</sup> (cf. Arnolds-Granlund 2010, p. 46). It comprises both the ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions (Vesterinen, 2011). It is a comprehensive concept which “refers to individual abilities, social and collective practices, both teaching and research, and both formal and informal learning” (Schofield, 2015, p.12). It entails a model of progression which is circular and not linear (Bingelli, Jorgensen & Remer, as cited in Christensen & Tufte, 2010).

Media education as framed in this study is an inclusive concept which includes demographic groups of all ages. It encompasses “a wide range of learners, individual preferences, genuine interests, creativity, and mutual respect” and “involves not only reading and receiving, but also doing, experiencing, experimenting, and empathizing” (Kupiainen & Sintonen, 2010, p.65). It includes processes in which individuals create, produce, and understand information through the lens of personal experience, points of view, and backgrounds (Kupiainen & Sintonen, 2010). Media education involves participation, creation, production, and meaning making, and includes the key ideas of agency, reflection, collaboration, and culture; and its results are measured not just by knowledge and skills but also experience (Kupiainen & Sintonen, 2010). To summarize, media education as it is conceptualized in this study is condensed into a wheel model as illustrated below:

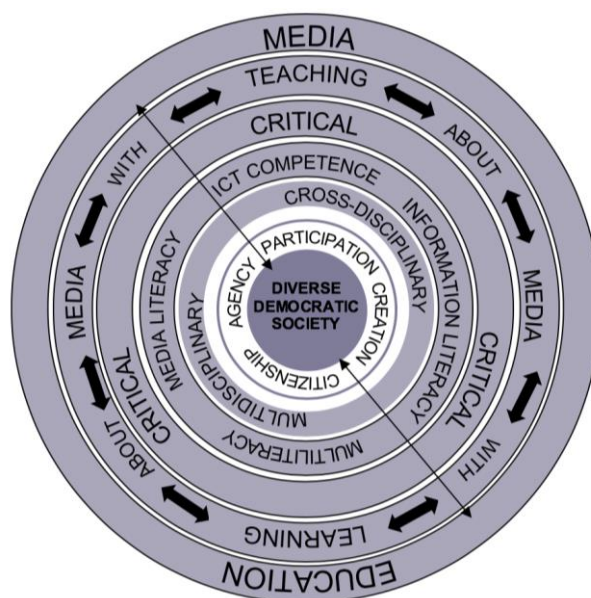


Figure 1. The Wheel Model of Media Education

The purpose of the model above (Figure 1) is to provide a clear visual depiction of the conceptual framework of this study. It is an endeavor to conceptualize this study within a broader, more detailed, and inclusive framework of my own construction, drawing from and merging the media education theories and definitions of Buckingham (2003), Christensen & Tufte (2010), Erstad (2010),

<sup>23</sup> Reflecting how individuals act (Arnolds-Granlund, 2010, p. 46)

<sup>24</sup> Discussing how individuals should act (Arnolds-Granlund, 2010, p. 46)

Kupiainen & Sintonen (2010), and Schofield (2015). As the research progressed, it became clear, not only from the content of the interview data but also my evolving perspective on media education, that a broader and more inclusive theoretical framework was needed. A framework was sought for which could hold the scope of this study, provide a frame for the data, and accurately reflect my views and perspective on what media education is and what it ought to be. This model is the result of that.

The model resembles a wheel with an outer rim, inner rims, spokes, a hub, and a central bore. The outer rim represents media education as a whole. It encompasses all forms of teaching and learning about and with the media, which are depicted as the inner rims of the wheel. The practice of teaching and learning about and with the media include the components of media literacy and information literacy (as well as the convergent form of the two: media and information literacy), ICT competence, and multiliteracy. All of these components are contained within a critical approach to media education. In other words, all teaching and learning about and with the media should be from a critical perspective. Media education is multidisciplinary as well as cross disciplinary, as portrayed by the final inner rim of this model. All of the aforementioned aspects and components of media education can be applied to a wide range of disciplines and areas of study, within almost any curriculum. The hub of the wheel are the elements of citizenship, agency, participation, and creation. These are the connectors or ‘hub’ through which all teaching and learning about and with the media (which includes the various components of media education) are connected and relate to the central bore. The central bore itself represents diverse and democratic society as a whole: which includes people of all ages, genders, and backgrounds. The spokes in this model are a crucial element because they indicate how each of the elements in this model, from the outer rim to the central bore, are connected to and influence each other. This model illustrates that, ultimately, media education influences democratic society, and vice versa. Each of the layers affect each other, and all are needed for the wheel to function as a cohesive whole. There is room in this wheel model for growth and expansion. As the field of media education as well as technology evolve, new rims and components can be added to the model. The wheel model can also be adapted and applied to other subject areas within the curriculum of teacher education, other areas of education, and even more specific areas of media education.

### Media Education Competencies and Skills

From a linguistic point of view, the term ‘competence’ is a broader term than ‘skill’ (see also Arnolds-Granlund, 2010). Nevertheless, both the terms ‘media education competencies’ and ‘media education skills’ will be used interchangeably in this thesis. In a media education context, competence refers to

a set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Ferrari, 2012). Whenever media education competencies or skills are mentioned, they include competencies or skills pertaining to Media Literacy, Information Literacy, Multiliteracy, and ICT Competence (which are all components of media education as illustrated in Figure 1). The terms ‘competencies’ and ‘skills’ are used whenever more than one competence or skill is referenced.

### **2.3 *Media and Information Literacy***

Media literacy is sometimes referred to as Media and Information Literacy, or MIL for short. While these terms are often used interchangeably (as in the case of this study), MIL is in fact the merging of the converging fields and overlapping concepts of Media Literacy and Information Literacy (Leaning, 2014; Wilson, Grizzle, Tuazon, Akyempong and Cheung, 2011). The UNESCO defines the term media and information literacy as an umbrella term that combines the various sets of media and information competencies offered by ‘Media Literacy’ and ‘Information Literacy’ (Grizzle & Singh, 2016, p.31).

Media literacy is widely regarded as the result of media education. Buckingham (2003, p.4) refers to media literacy as “the outcome” of media education. Specifically, he defines media literacy as “the knowledge, skills and competencies that are required in order to use and interpret media” (Buckingham, 2003, p.36), and points out the fact that in some countries, the term media literacy is used interchangeably with media education. For precisely this reason, both the terms ‘media education’ and ‘media literacy’ were used during the interviews for this study. The decision to use both terms, sometimes interchangeably, was justified as it became apparent throughout the course of the interviews that the participants themselves perceived the terms to be similar, if not interchangeable. On occasion, the participants even used the term ‘multiliteracy’ (which will be discussed later on in this chapter) interchangeably with ‘media education’ and ‘media literacy’. Kupiainen (2018, p.4) explains that this occurs because media literacy is “a key concept of media education, to the extent that sometimes media literacy and media education are not strictly separated”. He goes on to demonstrate this point by referring to the fact that some experts in the field like Hoehsmann and Poyntz (2012) use both the terms media literacy and media education similarly.

Media literacy, like media education, is a somewhat nebulous and multi-faceted entity which is not only susceptible but subject to change, thus making it a challenge to define and conceptualize (see also McDougall, 2014; Silverblatt et. al., 2014). Despite the tremendous increase in literature related to media literacy, there is much that we are still in the dark about (Erstad 2010). Erstad claims that one of the reasons for this is “the complexity and different dimensions of media literacy, not only

relating to educational concerns, but also to broader issues of cultural development defined by technology and the rise of the knowledge society (Erstad, 2010, p.18).

While so much has changed with regard to the digital media landscape in past years, a good number of the theories and definitions around media education and media literacy have remained consistent. Scholars and researchers seem to echo one another when it comes to the components and constructs of media education and media literacy. In an article published more than two decades ago, Megee describes the definition of media literacy which was agreed upon at a conference held at the Annenberg School for Communication in 1992. At the conference, media literacy came to be defined as “the ability to choose, to understand, to question, to evaluate, to create and/or produce and to respond thoughtfully to the media we consume” (Megee, 1997, p.23). Megee explains that media literacy is a modern and expanded form of what was traditionally viewed as literacy. She also goes on to define the four basic tenets of media literacy as *access*, *analysis*, *evaluation* and *production*. Although these references are rather old, they are by no means archaic. In fact, most scholars appear to define and describe media literacy along somewhat similar lines. For example, Ugur & Harro-Loit (2010, p.135) state that most efforts at defining media literacy “include the ability to access, understand, analyze, evaluate, create, and communicate information in variety of forms, from print to video”. In a like manner, Hobbs & Moore (2013, p.16) describe media literacy as inclusive of the ability to “access, analyze, compose, reflect, and take action in the world”. Hobbs (2010, p.17) defines the term digital and media literacy as

“the full range of cognitive, emotional and social competencies that includes the use of texts, tools and technologies; the skills of critical thinking and analysis; the practice of message composition and creativity; the ability to engage in reflection and ethical thinking; as well as active participation through teamwork and collaboration”

In an evolutionary step towards redefining the concept of media literacy, Kupiainen & Sintonen (2010) moved to expand and grow the mainstream definition and understanding of media literacy. They challenge the traditional view of media literacy as a set of competencies and argue instead that it is not merely an ability but a participatory social and focal practice. They emphasize that “literacy is an act of sharing” and claim that discussion, collaboration, mixing, designing, rendering, and sharing is all part of a social literacy process (Kupiainen & Sintonen, 2010, p.59). More relevant to the context of this study is the fact that they “consider media literacy as a basis for the cultural and social orientation of ethically empowered future educators and learners” (Kupiainen & Sintonen, 2010, p.65). This is a vital point to consider in this study which concerns media education in relation to future educators.

In light of the preceding literature, it could be put forward that media literacy is the cognitive, emotional, and social competencies regarding the use of media in its many forms and the ability to

do so in a thoughtful, analytical, critical, reflective, creative, participatory, and ethical manner. This is a convergent concept which is a hybrid of the various schools of thoughts over the past twenty years. It includes the media literacy theories of Buckingham (2003), Hobbs (2010), Hobbs & Moore (2013), Kupiainen & Sintonen (2010), Megee (1997), and Ugur & Harro-Loit (2010), among others.

If media literacy is understood in the definitions, terms, and concepts described above, then critical media literacy refers to the critical practice of media literacy. Critical media literacy, in this thesis, refers to the critical aspects of media literacy in practice. It is not merely about being media literate, but being media literate in a manner which is critical. Kellner & Share (2007, p. 62) define critical media literacy as a form of literacy which does the following:

“focuses on 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”

This critical form of media literacy is one which takes into account “the element of power, questioning and critical analysis” (Ligoeki, 2017, p.10). According to Ligoeki, in critical media literacy all media texts one interacts with is questioned in order to understand the inherent power structures within the media. A critical approach towards media, and the skills associated with that, is understood to be an essential and central feature of media literacy as it is conceptualized in this study. It is presumed that media literacy is an inherently critical endeavor in and of itself, or at least it should be.

Expanding on the definition of media literacy, it is necessary to consider some broader perspectives and understanding of the term; especially when it comes to the perspectives held by international governing and policy-making bodies such as the European Commission (EC) and the United Nations (UN). This is because the impetus for the study derives from and pertains to factors which are policy driven.

The EC defines media literacy as “the capacity to access, have a critical understanding of, and interact with the media”<sup>25</sup>. The EC definition covers a broad range of media, including broadcasting, radio and press, from a range of distribution channels. Perhaps more crucial, considering the current digital and news landscape, is the EC’s recognition of the fact that media literacy is “a tool empowering citizens as well as raising their awareness and helping counter the effects of disinformation campaigns and fake news spreading through digital media”<sup>26</sup>.

The UNESCO Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Curriculum and Competency Framework defines media literacy as the ability to understand the role and functions of media, understand the conditions under which media operate, evaluate media content critically, engage with

<sup>25</sup> Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/media-literacy>

<sup>26</sup> Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/media-literacy>



media as an act of self-expression and democratic participation, and review the skills needed to self-produce content<sup>27</sup>. The UNESCO's definition and framing of MIL illustrates just how broad and inclusive the concept can be, depending on the perspectives from which it is viewed. Grizzle & Singh (2016) explain that some scholars regard information literacy as the broader field of study and media literacy as a component of it. Conversely, there are others who view media literacy as the broader field of study and consider information literacy as a component of it. The position taken in this study is that media and information literacy is a convergent term that subsumes both media literacy and information literacy.

## 2.4 *Multiliteracy*

It is vital to define and conceptualize the term 'multiliteracy' in this thesis because it is one of the key terms relating to media education in the FNCC14. The concept of multiliteracy was first introduced in 1996 by The New London Group in an attempt to widen the understanding of the concept of literacy from a traditional, reading and writing focused, linguistic based literacy to one which includes "a multiplicity of discourses" (The New London Group, 2010, p.61). They argued that literacy pedagogy needed to "account for the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies" (2010, p.61). Their definition of multiliteracy includes the "understanding and competent control of representational forms that are becoming increasingly significant in the overall communications environment" (2010, p.61). Drawing from the work of The New London Group, Arnolds-Granlund (2010, p.49) refers to multiliteracy as "a compilation of reading abilities beyond mere text reading proficiency". According to Rowsell & Walsh (2011, p.56), scholars studying multiliteracy claim that this expansion and shift in the concept of literacy was necessary in order "to reflect this dramatic shift in our ideological and interpretative frame".

Since the inception of the term, the concept of multiliteracy has been applied to an extensive range of academic disciplines (Mills, 2009, p.104). Cope & Kalantzis (2015) explain that there are two facets to the 'multi' in multiliteracies. One refers to the "variability of meaning making in different cultural, social or domain-specific contexts" while the other refers to the increasing multimodal nature of meaning-making wherein "written-linguistic modes of meaning interface with oral, visual, audio, gestural, tactile, and spatial patterns of meaning" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, p.3). They explain that the multiliteracies approach prescribes bringing multimodal texts into the curriculum and classroom. This is echoed by Serafini & Gee (2017, p.3) who state that "the complex

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<sup>27</sup> Key Outcomes/Elements of Media and Information Literacy. Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers. UNESCO, 2011. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000192971>

view of meaning-making reflected in the NLG's definition of multiliteracies recognized the importance of multiple modalities in meaning-making as well as the value and necessity of diversity in representations and meaning-making".

Multiliteracy in the FNCC14 is "a transversal, cross-curricular competence which combines all subjects" (Halinen et. al., 2015, p.142). It is a term which subsumes media literacy in the FNCC14. It refers to the ability to interpret, produce, and evaluate various age-appropriate texts. These texts include newspapers, magazines, books, games, films, and music as well as content produced and selected by students; in other words, media in an expansive and participatory sense (Opetushallitus, 2016). Multiliteracy in the curriculum also includes visual literacy through visual modes of expression (Halinen et. al., 2015, p.142). Halinen et. al. (2015, p.143) explain that multiliteracy is a necessary competence which enables students "to interpret the world around them and to perceive its cultural diversity" and "supports the development of critical thinking and learning skills". They further elaborate that multiliteracy practices in the Finnish context include "obtaining, combining, modifying, producing, presenting and evaluating information in different forms, in different environments and situations, and by using various tools" Halinen et. al. (2015, p. 143). Together, these descriptions of multiliteracy illustrate how the term is conceptualized within this study.

## ***2.5 Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Competence***

In a study which positions ICT within the broader conceptualization of media education, it is important that the term 'ICT' (and ICT Competence) is conceptualized and carefully defined. The term 'Information and Communication Technology' (ICT) evolved from the term 'Information Technology' (Arnolds-Granlund, 2010, p.44). A deeper exploration of the term reveals that, like media education itself, there are some challenges and variations in defining ICT universally. This is partly due to the "diverse applications of the term ICT" within various contexts, and the rather tacit way the term is defined in different fields (Zuppo, 2012, p.13). According to Zuppo (2012, p.19), ICT within an educational context "encompasses not only a reference to equipment (i.e. devices) but also to a group of skills or competencies that teachers and students must possess in order to be considered having achieved a certain level of competencies as it relates to ICTs". In accordance with Zuppo's conceptualization, ICT in the context of this thesis refers to skills and competencies, devices and tools, as well as pedagogies; and all within an educational context and application.

Zuppo's framing of ICT is also echoed in the Nordic context. For example, Tømte (2015, p.141) states that "ICT represents not merely tools, ICT also informs and shapes our modes of communication, and the processes of our thinking and our creativity". She explains that ICT in

education encompasses a diverse range of topics which include “competences toward the use of various digital tools and digital technologies” (Tømte, 2015, p. 140). ICT from the perspective of this study is an integral part of media education; with media education as the larger elevated concept which includes ICT (Arnolds-Granlund, 2010; Kupiainen, 2018). Kupiainen (2018, p.3) describes the concept of ICT as a pedagogical tool and object of study within the broader concept of media education. He explains that media education includes “critical perspectives towards media and ICT, which means studying the role of the media in society, education, and everyday life” (2018, p.5).

ICT is represented in the FNCC14 by the term ‘ICT Competence’, which is one of the seven transversal competencies mentioned in the curriculum. Within the framework of this study, the concept of ICT competence is equivalent to that of ICT literacy. The International ICT Literacy Panel (2002, p.2) defines ICT literacy as “using digital technology, communications tools, and/or networks to access, manage, integrate, evaluate, and create information in order to function in a knowledge society.” In the context of this thesis, ICT competence refers to the capabilities and proficiencies in using technology pertaining to information and communication, and is considered an integral part of learning for individual students as well as the school community. This is based on the detailed description of ICT competence in the FNCC14. The description of ICT Competence in the FNCC14 includes learning about different ICT applications and their use, as well as their importance in daily life. A careful examination of the ICT components and goals described in the FNCC14 reveals that each individual component is directly related to media education and the various aspects and goals of media education. These include the use of software, equipment and tools, safety and wellbeing practices, information management and appropriation, participation, collaboration, networking, and digital citizenship. Those are just some of the elements included within the concept of media education in this study. Both the terms ‘ICT competence’ and ‘ICT skills’ are used interchangeably in this thesis, depending on which form of the word makes more grammatical sense in the context it is used.

## 2.6 Research Question

In considering the demands of the Finnish National Core Curriculum, the highly digitalized environment that of Finland, and the implications of these for future teachers and pedagogical practices from a media education perspective, the question posed by this study is this:

*How is media education present in the curriculum of class teacher education from the perspective of pre-service class teacher students?*

That is the question which this study will endeavor to explore, elucidate, and answer.

## 3 IMPLEMENTING THE STUDY

This chapter will detail the research design as well the research methods involved in the creation of this thesis. It will briefly explain the process leading up to the eventual selection of the research design and elucidate the various methodological aspects of the research. This study is a qualitative case study which utilizes in-depth interviews, and is approached from the interpretivist paradigm. This third chapter begins with an introduction to the research paradigm which steered the course of the study and provided a framework of inquiry upon which the study was designed. It then continues with an explanation of how the study eventually came to be in its current form. This is then followed by a detailed description and explanation of the various components that make up the methodology of this study.

### 3.1 *Research Design*

#### The Research Journey

This research journey took almost three years, from its inception to completion. It began with an introductory lecture into the field of media education in Finland, which sparked an idea that grew into research questions which were eventually developed into a study. For the most part, the journey of this study very closely resembles the research journey described by Mackenzie & Knipe (2006), which was used as a guideline throughout this process. According to Mackenzie & Knipe the journey is not a simple linear path. They explain that the process “is more realistically cyclical with the researcher returning to earlier steps while at the same time moving ahead to later steps” and that subtle or significant changes could be made as the research progresses (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, p.7). This was certainly the case in this study. As the following sections of this chapter will demonstrate, the journey of this study was anything but linear. Throughout the journey, many changes were made. These include changes in the method of inquiry (from a quantitative survey to qualitative interviews), a rephrasing of the research questions (for accuracy and congruence with my research paradigm) and an overall rethinking of the theoretical and conceptual framework. There were also changes in the number and gender of participants (due to challenges in recruiting) and adjustments to the interview questions. This fluid, dynamic and flexible process was critical to this study because it

denotes a sensitivity to emergent findings (Morrow & Smith, 2000; Morrow 2007). Perhaps the most significant of the changes mentioned were those relating to the theoretical framework and method of inquiry, as these have the biggest impact on the outcome of the study.

### The Interpretivist Paradigm

This study was designed within the framework of the interpretivist paradigm. The term 'paradigm' can essentially be defined as "a loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient thinking and research" (Bogdan & Biklen 1998, p.22). The interpretivist paradigm is one of many methodological frameworks which "hold qualitative research together" (Creswell, 1998, p.13). The Dictionary of Social Research Methods defines the interpretivist paradigm as:

"An approach to understanding social phenomena that is concerned with their meaning rather than their origin or function. It is informed by Max Weber's (1864–1920) observation that humans are meaning makers, so that in order to understand social action we need to understand the meaning of the actions in question for the subjects."<sup>28</sup>

According to Snape and Spencer (2003, p.7), interpretivism is a school of thought that places stress on "the importance of interpretation as well as observation in understanding the social world". In interpretivism, the researcher and the social world influence each other, and the researcher is focused on exploring and understanding the social world through the understanding of both the participant and the researcher (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p.17). Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012, p.14) explain that the interpretivist approach, having stemmed from a hermeneutic tradition, "is most interested in interpreting deeper meaning in discourse and understanding multiple realities". Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) explain that the interpretivist paradigm developed from the works of German philosophers which were termed phenomenology<sup>29</sup> and hermeneutics<sup>30</sup>. Mackenzie and Knipe (2006, p.3) further elaborate that the interpretivist approaches to research

"have the intention of understanding "the world of human experience" (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p.36)...The interpretivist/constructivist researcher tends to rely upon the "participants' views of the situation being studied" (Creswell, 2003, p.8) and recognises the impact on the research of their own background and experiences."

The choice to frame the study within this paradigm was made because it was the most fitting paradigm for the purpose of the study and the research question. The interpretivist paradigm focuses on the question of how something is observed or experienced and seeks to understand the nature of reality, which is exactly what this study is attempting to do. Choosing a paradigm at the onset of the research

<sup>28</sup> <https://www-oxfordreference-com.libproxy.tuni.fi/view/10.1093/acref/9780191816826.001.0001/acref-9780191816826-e-0196>

<sup>29</sup> See: Husserl, E. (1965). *Phenomenology and the crisis of philosophy: Philosophy as rigorous science and philosophy and the crisis of European man*. New York: Harper & Row.

<sup>30</sup> The study of interpretive understanding. See: Palmer, R. E. (1969). *Hermeneutics: Interpretation theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

is vital because this determines “the intent, motivation and expectations for the research” and provides a “basis for subsequent choices regarding methodology, methods, literature or research design”, as it is the paradigm and research questions which determine the most appropriate methodology for the study (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, p.2).

## The Qualitative Method

This was initially intended to be a quantitative survey-based study utilizing online questionnaires. However, further examination of the available research on the topic of media education in teacher education in Finland, as well as consultations with my supervising professor resulted in a reassessment of this approach. All of the research which I have found on this specific topic thus far are statistical quantitative studies. There is yet to be a known qualitative study conducted from the perspective of pre-service teacher students through in-depth interviews. In consideration of this, it was believed that a qualitative study of this nature would have more to contribute to the body of research and dialogue around the topic. Therefore, there is the potential for this study, despite its small stature, to bring something of value to this very specific and localized field of study. This was the primary motivation for choosing the qualitative method.

Qualitative research “involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.3). Within the qualitative tradition, this study takes on the functional form of contextual research, which describes “the form or nature of what exists” (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p.27&39). This brings us to another important reason why the qualitative method was chosen: the fact that this method of research is most appropriate for answering the question of ‘how?’ (Creswell, 1998, p.18). According to Creswell, whether a strong rationale exists for choosing a qualitative approach depends on the nature of the research question; and research questions often begin with a ‘how’ in qualitative studies. Since this is a ‘how’ study, the qualitative route is the clear way forward.

The third reason for this choice is the fact that this is a study about the experiences of a particular group of people. Morrow (2007, p.211) argues that qualitative research is “the most useful approach to understanding the meanings people make of their experiences”. Qualitative research is emic<sup>31</sup> and idiographic<sup>32</sup>, and it “produces knowledge claims about one or a very few individuals, groups, or institutions” (Morrow & Smith, 2000, p.200). It is a process of seeking to understand based on inquiry traditions that explore social or human problems (Creswell, 1998).

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<sup>31</sup> Relating to, or involving analysis of cultural phenomena from the perspective of one who participates in the culture being studied (Merriam-Webster dictionary)

<sup>32</sup> Relating to or dealing with something concrete, individual, or unique (Merriam-Webster dictionary)

## The Collective Case Study Approach

This study is a qualitative case study of five bounded cases. A case study is a research method or approach in which a bounded system (or case) is explored through detailed and in-depth data collection methods such as interviews (Creswell 2007, p. 245 & 246). In case studies, “the researcher explores in depth a program, and event, and activity, a process, or one or more individuals” (Creswell, 2003, p.17). According to Freebody (2003, p. 84-85), “case studies focus on one particular instance of educational experience”, show a “strong sense of time and place” and represent a commitment to the “significance of localized experience”.

Schofield (2015, p.53), drawing from Gudmundsdottir (2004), states that “case studies usually focus on a small, relatively homogenous and geographically limited field, for example a group of students, a teacher or a class”. Most case studies are focused on an issue, and a specific case (such as individuals, groups, programmes or activities, for example) is chosen to provide an insight into the issue (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, “the focus in case study research is not predominantly on the individual”, rather it is on the issue itself and individual case is “selected to understand the issue” (Creswell, 2007, p. 245), which is true in this study.

Creswell (1998, p.63) recommends choosing the type of case study best suited for the research; which in this study is the collective instrumental type (Stake 1995, as cited in Creswell et. al., 2007, p. 246). In a collective instrumental case study, “the researcher focuses on an issue or concern and then selects a number of bounded cases to illustrate this issue” (Creswell et. al., 2007, p 246). In this study, the issue focused on is the presence of media education in the curriculum of pre-service teacher education, and the bounded cases (collective instrument) selected to illustrate this issue are the five pre-service teacher education students. A multiple-case design “uses the logic of replication where the procedures are replicated for each case” (Yin, 2003, as cited in Creswell et. al., 2007, p.246). The cases in this study are bounded by time (the duration of the teacher education programme) and place (the programme itself, at the specific university).

### **3.2 Data Collection**

The data collection for this study was carried out through in-depth, semi structured, individual interviews. There were five interviews in total, each lasting approximately forty minutes on average. In-depth interviews were chosen as a tool of data collection because it was presumed that they would provide more insight, as well as richer and more detailed data, which would be advantageous for this study, especially in terms of adding value to the field of research.

Individual interviews are the most commonly used method in qualitative research (Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2003, p.138; Snape & Spencer, 2003, p.36). This method was chosen for the “undiluted focus” it gives to the individual and their experiences, the detailed investigation it allows into participant’s perspectives, as well as the “in-depth understanding of the personal context within which the research phenomena are located” (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p.36).

The interview questions were semi structured. According to Freebody (2003, p.132), “Semi-structured interviews begin with a predetermined set of questions, but allow some latitude in the breadth of relevance”. Freebody explains that this means that the interviewer will follow certain lines of talk and follow them through with ad hoc questions. He further explains that semi-structured interviews establish central issues which need to be covered, but leave some flexibility in how these issues are discussed. The participants in this study were asked a series of closed-ended and open-ended questions concerning various aspects of media education and how they relate to the FNCC14 as well as their own curriculum experiences. These questions required some thinking and reflecting on their part. They were also asked some follow through questions based on their responses.

These interviews were of an inductive nature. Inductive probing refers to an interview technique “which allows the researcher to clarify expressions or meaning and further permits participants to tell their story” (Guest et. al., 2012, p.13). Probing and prompting (Guest et. al. 2012, p. 13; Legard et. al. 2003, p. 168) were used as techniques of clarification, elicitation, and elaboration throughout the interviews. The interview questions were modified slightly after the first interview. An effort was made to include, in subsequent interviews, the issues and themes that surfaced during the first interview. The first interview revealed aspects of the study which had not previously been considered nor anticipated (this will be discussed further in the findings section). This was a positive and welcome development as it not only widened my perspectives as a researcher but also resulted in reflexive changes in the study. It led to adjustments and additions to the interview questions and even a reevaluation of the theoretical framework to the point of revising the type of media education theory the study is positioned in.

In this study, the data collected is derived solely from the interviews. The interview data is treated as a resource which reflects the reality of the interviewees outside of the interviews, as described by Rapley (2004, p. 16). The study utilized generated data which was obtained through the interviews. Generated data from in-depth interviews “yield a 'recounting' of phenomena, originated specifically for the research study” (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p.45). The data itself is the textual content which was collected in the form of participant responses during the interviews. This was collected by recording the interviews using audio recording software (the iPhone voice memo application). The audio data was then transcribed verbatim using a word processing software (Microsoft Word). This



resulted in a total of 54 pages of transcribed text. This sum of all of the participants' verbal responses to the questions they were asked constituted the entire data pool of the study.

I had initially planned on taking notes, in addition to recording the interviews, but abandoned this plan when it became quickly apparent that it was impractical and distracting. It was almost impossible to write fast enough and be completely focused on two things at once. Instead, I chose to focus on attentively listening to and engaging with the participants. This allowed me to be reflexive in my questioning, following up on answers and asking further questions which were not planned.

There was a total of five participants: four females and one male, as depicted in Figure 2 below. They were all teacher education students who were studying to be class teachers. The participants were in various stages of the teacher education programme; ranging from the first year of study to the sixth year of study. There was one 1<sup>st</sup> year student, one 2<sup>nd</sup> year student, one 4<sup>th</sup> year student, one 5<sup>th</sup> year student, and one 6<sup>th</sup> year student.

PARTICIPANT	GENDER	YEAR OF STUDY
CASE 1	FEMALE	6
CASE 2	FEMALE	4
CASE 3	FEMALE	2
CASE 4	MALE	1
CASE 5	FEMALE	5

*Figure 2. Participants of the Study*

The total of five participants may seem like a relatively small number, yet it is considered sufficient for a qualitative study such as this. Samples which are small in scale and selected purposefully are one of the key elements of qualitative research (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003; Snape & Spencer, 2003). This was definitely the case in this study. Although the number of participants is relatively small, it is still sufficient and adequately representative of class teacher education students.

Despite my intentions and efforts at ensuring gender diversity, there was only one male participant in the study. The initial plan was to interview three female and three male participants. However, it was nearly impossible to find a male teacher education student who was willing to participate in the study. I did everything I could, including asking for recommendations from the female students I knew and requesting for help on teacher education students' forums and chat groups. In the end, only one male participant was able and willing to participate.

Most of the participants were students whom I knew personally. One was recommended by another participant. It was hoped that the fact that I knew most of the participants personally would result in a sense of trust; enabling them to be more at ease during the interview process, and thus be able to communicate more openly and freely. Despite their familiarity with me, the participants did not know the details of the study prior to the interviews. They were only informed that the thesis

pertained to media education in teacher education. They were not given any of the questions beforehand, in order to ensure that their answers were spontaneous, honest, and unpremeditated.

The sampling decisions in this study were done in consideration of the research design, as Maxwell (2005) suggests. It took into account my relationship with the participants (I knew three of them outside of the study, and had met one in a mutual course), the feasibility of the data collection, as well as my research goals, as described by Maxwell (2005, p. 235). This research utilized a combination of purposive sampling and convenience sampling. Maxwell (2005, p. 235) defines purposive sampling as “a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices”. According to Ritchie, Lewis and Elam (2003, p.79), “Purposive sampling is precisely what the name suggests. Members of a sample are chosen with a 'purpose' to represent a location or type in relation to a key criterion.” They explain that one of the principal aims in purposive sampling is to ensure that some diversity is included within each of the key criteria.

In this study, a purposive sampling decision was made early on in the planning stage towards ensuring gender diversity and representation. The study was originally designed to have an equal number of male and female teacher education students. This was in order to ensure that the data collection would be balanced in terms of gender representation and male and female perspectives. Nonetheless, there were no presumptions made about whether there would be any variations in the data caused by the factor of gender. This was a question that was kept open, free of any assumptions, and left for the data to reveal. As it turns out, there indeed were some differences in the data collected between the female participants and the sole male participant. These will be further discussed in the chapter on findings.

The approach to purposive sampling called ‘typical case sampling’ (Patton, 2002, as cited in Ritchie et. al., 2003) which was employed in this study was the single most important driving factor behind the participant selection process. In typical case sampling, “cases which characterize positions that are 'normal' or 'average' are selected to provide detailed profiling” (Ritchie et. al., p. 83). The participants in this study were all selected based on one major criterion: they are all pre- service class teacher education students currently enrolled in the teacher education programme at the same university. They were a typical sample of the average teacher education student at this university, each enrolled within the same programme and subjected to the same curriculum, as shown by the curriculum and programme structure on the website of the university’s faculty of education<sup>33</sup>. This is

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<sup>33</sup> <https://www.tuni.fi/studentsguide/curriculum/educations/otm-22a8b2d1-d614-4046-a2d8-1fcb5b6d33f9?year=2019>

precisely the demographic from whose perspectives the answers to the research question were being sought.

Convenience sampling was also a factor for participant selection in this study. It is based on convenience, whereby the researcher chooses the sample according to the ease of access. As I wanted to investigate media education from the perspective of teacher education students, it was clear that I needed to conduct the study in an institution of higher education which offered a teacher education programme. Since I am studying at a local university which happens to have such a programme, that institution became the most obvious, logical, and convenient choice; especially due to the ease of access and logistical factors which made the research process feasible in terms of time and cost.

The study was conducted on the premises of Tampere University in Finland. This university was chosen for a number of reasons. The first is that this is one of only two universities in Finland<sup>34</sup> which offer a teacher education programme as well as a media education programme<sup>35</sup>. This suggested a higher probability that more media education related courses would be offered here compared to a university that does not offer a specific media education programme. In other words, this is probably a best-case scenario option for the availability of a variety of media education courses. The second reason is the ease of access and convenience. The university is located in the same city where I live, and it is also where I am currently enrolled as a student. As such, this was a practical and convenient location in which to conduct the study.

Qualitative research is usually conducted in a natural setting (Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), whereby the environment or location is commonplace to the participants and the phenomenon being studied. The interviews in this study took place at various locations around the main campus of the university. This was considered the most appropriate setting since the interview participants were all students of the university. The campus was not only familiar to them, it was also a place in which they felt comfortable. The location was also a safe common denominator between the researcher and the participants, as we were all students at the same institution. The environment and location were considered to be safe, comfortable, and easily accessible by all parties involved.

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<sup>34</sup> The other is the University of Lapland. Source: [https://kavi.fi/sites/default/files/documents/mil\\_in\\_finland.pdf](https://kavi.fi/sites/default/files/documents/mil_in_finland.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> The Former University of Tampere offered an international master's degree programme in media education. The newly merged Tampere University offers a new master's degree programme in digital literacy education instead.

### 3.3 *Data Analysis*

#### The Exploratory Approach

The first phase of the analysis was to listen to the audio recordings of all the interview sessions a few times in order to familiarize with the data. Following this, the audio recordings were transcribed into a document format using Microsoft Word. At the beginning of the transcription process, the decision was made to transcribe only the speech portions of the interviews since non-verbal cues would not be analyzed in this study. The process of listening to the audio data and transcribing it into textual format turned out to be a form of analysis in itself. Listening to the participants' responses and writing them down created an idea of the scope of the data and the themes and categories arising within them. I began to notice some patterns and became conscious of these during the subsequent interviews.

After the transcription process, I read through the data multiple times to familiarize myself with it and immerse myself in it. As I did so, I looked for key words, themes, concepts, categories, common threads, or patterns that emerged from and occurred throughout the corpus of data, as suggested by Spencer, Ritchie & O'Connor (2003, p.202). This was done in order to make sense of the data as a whole, and to see if there were any meaningful connections across each set. While this was done instinctively at first, I later came to realize that this is a common approach to data analysis and is called the 'exploratory approach' (Guest, Macqueen & Namey, 2012).

In the exploratory approach, "the researcher carefully reads and rereads the data, looking for key words, trends, themes, or ideas in the data that will help outline the analysis, before any analysis takes place" (Guest et. al., 2012, p. 7-8). According to Guest et. al. (2012), the exploratory approach is content driven and asks, for example, what a certain group or number of people think about a certain subject or phenomenon. Specific codes and categories of analysis are not predetermined but instead derived from the data. The data itself is usually generated; most commonly through purposive sampling. Initially, there was uncertainty about how to proceed with the analysis of the data in this study. However, the act of collecting, listening to, and transcribing the audio data aided in deciding which method of analysis to use. After some thought, it was determined that the best way forward in attempting a thorough analysis of the data was to apply the inductive content analysis method.

#### Inductive Content Analysis

Content analysis is a method of analysis in which written, verbal, or visual messages are analyzed based on their content (Cole, 1988, as cited in Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p.107). It is a method of analyzing documents, in this case the interview transcripts, in which the entire body (or content) of words can

be distilled and narrowed down into fewer content-related categories (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p.108). According to Spencer et. al. (2003, p.202), content analysis is a form of data analysis which mainly concerns “capturing and interpreting common sense, substantive meanings in the data”. This seemed like the best way to both break down and encapsulate the amount and type of interview data collected in this study. With the data in the form of multiple pages of transcribed texts, a form of analysis was needed which would encapsulate and condense that data into smaller categories and a few larger themes, if possible. In the inductive form of content analysis, categories are derived from the data and move from the specific to the general (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p.109). Codes, subcategories, and larger categories are ‘induced’ and allowed to emerge from the data. As Elo & Kyngäs (2008, p.108) explain, the aim in content analysis is “to attain a condensed and broad description of the phenomenon”. The three main phases of the content analysis process are preparation, organizing, and reporting (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The first two phases (preparing and organizing) will be discussed in this chapter, while the latter (reporting) will be addressed in the next chapter.

### Preparing the Data

The first step in the analysis process, as recommended by Elo & Kyngäs (2008, p.110), is to select the unit of analysis. The units of analysis in this study are individual themes, or the expression of a single idea (cf. Zhang & Wildemuth, 2005), across the transcript data from each interview. As part of the preparation phase, the first step after transcribing the interviews was to immerse myself in the data. In practice, this meant reading the transcripts multiple times and building an understanding of the transcripts individually as well as collectively. This enabled me to see the emerging concepts and themes in the data.

At the onset of the data analysis process, a decision had to be made on whether to analyze only the manifest content or also the latent content (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013). Due to the fact that this is an interpretivist case study which examines and explores a phenomenon through the experiences of the participants, it was decided that both the manifest and the latent content in the data would be analyzed. In this study which focuses purely on participant experiences and perspectives, it is important and logical that the underlying meanings of the verbal responses are taken into account; not just the purely lexical surface meanings of the words uttered. Analyzing the latent content also involves some interpretation on the part of the researcher, which aligns well with the interpretivist paradigm.

## Organizing the Data

Having decided to use both manifest and latent content, the next step of content analysis began; which is the process of organizing the data. This process involves open coding, categorizing the data, and abstraction (Maxwell, 2005). While there are no systematic rules for analyzing data in content analysis, its hallmark is the classification of larger text data into smaller content categories (Weber, 1990 and Burnard 1996, as cited in Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Following the recommended procedures in conducting content analysis (as defined by Elo & Kyngäs, 2008), the data was organized using a form of open coding and category creation. Coding and categorizing are methods of analysis that can be applied to many types of data and is the most prominent method when it comes to interview data (Flick, 2007, pp.100-101). Open coding refers to the process of writing down notes and headings in the text as one is reading it (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p.109). The form of coding done in this study is a variation of this, with the notes and headings written down on a separate sheet of paper instead of within the transcribed texts. The transcriptions were coded according to various points or subject matters that were being discussed in the interviews. Every line of text was examined to see if there was any relevant data which should be coded, thereby creating a set of codes throughout the entire corpus. The codes were then transferred to a code sheet. If there was data deemed as relevant, it was noted, highlighted, and transferred to the code sheet. This process created 14 pages of open code from a total of 54 pages of transcriptions.

When the list of open codes had been compiled, the code sheet was read a number of times to make sense of the codes, examine how they related to each other, and determine if they could be grouped together. Codes that had similar themes were grouped together under larger categories. This process produced clusters of grouped codes arranged somewhat neatly on the code sheet. Since the entire process was carried out on a word processing document on a computer, the codes and clusters were easily moved around by cutting and pasting. Elo & Kyngäs (2008) label these clusters of codes as 'sub-categories'. For the sake of clarity and cohesion that is the term we will use henceforth.

When every single piece of code had been satisfactorily categorized and grouped into subcategories, these subcategories were then examined to see if they made clear sense and could be given distinct labels. During this process, the interview questions were used as a reference to guide in the categorizing of the various groups of responses. This endeavor resulted in the creation of labels for each group, thus generating generic categories built up from the codes.

Once this was achieved, the generic categories were examined for any common factors among them that would justify further grouping and abstraction which would lead to the forming of larger categories. This took considerable effort, careful consideration, and interpretation. In the end, a few

larger themes (or main categories) were observed emerging from the subcategories. Following these main categories as observed in the data, the generic categories were moved around until each had a home and fit satisfactorily under a main category.

### The Abstraction Process

There was an average total of about eleven pages worth of transcribed text from each case which had to be categorized and analyzed in a meaningful way. These were eventually categorized into six overarching categories or themes. This process of clustering, grouping, and narrowing down into increasingly larger categories which describe the phenomenon being studied is called abstraction (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Following the model presented by Elo & Kyngäs (2008, p. 111), the abstraction process used in this study is elaborated below. In this example, the main category created from the coding of the data was labeled as ‘Experiences’. This main category is made up of two generic components: the participants’ experiences with media education in their curriculum and their experiences of media education during their teaching practice. Each of these two generic categories were made up of many subcategories. The subcategories were drawn up directly from various lines of code which were extracted from the transcripts. The following are examples of the interview transcript excerpts from which part of the data set for the main category of ‘Experiences’ was derived. (‘I’ stands for ‘Interviewer’ and ‘C1’ stands for ‘Case 1’).

#### **EXCERPT A**

I: Have you have you taken any media education, or media literacy related courses thus far?

**C1: I think I’ve had one. One course that was related to this media education.**

I: Do you remember what it was called?

**C1: I do not remember. It was probably during my second or third year.**

I: Yeah?

**C1: But I do remember some things that they taught in there.**

When probed further about her experience with the one media education course she did take, this is what she described:

#### **EXCERPT B**

**C1: I just think that it was like not updated because, they...**

I: Like it was not up to date you mean?

**C1: No, it was not up to date. Um, they taught us to use blogs, as like blogging as a tool to like learn.**

I: Okay.

**C1: And I thought that was like, there is something, like more new stuff that I actually don't know about that I would have liked to learn because that was the thing that we used when I was in the school.**

From excerpt A, it was coded that, in the experience of this participant, there is very little media education in the curriculum and what is present is vague and not very memorable. Therefore, that experience was interpretively summed up as ‘limited’. From excerpt B, it was coded that media education courses are not up to date and are not very relevant to the participant’s need. This was then

summed up as 'outdated'. In this manner, I worked through the entire transcript, summarizing, condensing, and interpreting the gist of the responses. Phrases, sentences, and sometimes entire paragraphs were narrowed down into larger themes or concepts. Each idea, theme, or concept was then labeled with a term which most accurately described it. The entire transcript data was analyzed through this systematic process. This produced grouped and labelled subcategories, nested within generic categories, which are then each nested within six main categories.

### Coding and Retrieval

During the abstraction process, the entire data corpus was color coded according to the six major categories in order to facilitate identification and retrieval. This enabled easy cross-referencing and comparison across the entire data set. In order to organize the data clearly, each main category was assigned a specific color. The transcript texts were then color coded according to which main category they belonged to; thus, making it easy to see which groups of text belonged together, or related to each other, across the data corpus. This made it possible to cross reference, search, and compare the data according to categories, both within and across cases. This is both a cross sectional and in situ 'code and retrieve' method (Mason, 2002, as cited in Spencer et. al. 2003). The purpose of this form of coding and retrieval is not to produce a count of things but rather to "break down the data and rearrange it into categories that facilitate comparison between things in the same category and between categories" which Maxwell (2005, p.237) argues is the goal of coding. The simple act of color coding enabled the convenient retrieving and comparison of related data, which facilitated the analysis and writing process.

### Challenges in Data Analysis

Analyzing the data and presenting the findings were challenging steps in this study. This is a common experience for researchers using this form of analysis, as noted by Elo & Kyngäs (2008, p.113). Perhaps the biggest challenge in data analysis was the absence of simple systematic rules and guidelines for analysis, as recognized by Elo & Kyngäs (2008). They explain that content analysis is not linear and straightforward but complex and flexible, with no simple 'right' way of doing it. This flexibility was paralyzing at times, especially in the beginning phases of analysis. The hardest part of the process was simply getting started. With the level of flexibility afforded by this method, it was difficult to evaluate and decide for myself what variations would be appropriate for this study. As Elo & Kyngäs explain (based on Hoskins & Mariano, 2004), "each inquiry is distinctive, and the results depend on the skills, insights, analytic abilities and style of the investigator" (2008, p.113). In other words, so much of the process depends personally on the researcher, and that made it challenging.



## Role of the Researcher

In this study, the researcher was not merely a passive data gatherer, transcriber, and recorder of results but an active participant of the process: determining the theoretical framework, forming the interview questions, conducting the interviews reflexively, and interpreting the participants' responses. In other words, there was a clear yet somewhat implicit presence of the researcher throughout the entire study. I often steered the direction of the questions and discussions, even providing theoretical insights concerning media education, during the interview when the participants needed further clarification. My opinions concerning media education and teacher education were not only the catalyst for the study, they influenced the formulation of questions as well as the data analysis. The findings were derived from a data corpus that was subject to my interpretation, through the lens of my conceptual framework as well as my values. This is a fact that I must acknowledge in the interest of transparency and integrity. This embracing of the researcher's values is a feature of the research paradigm within which I am operating. As Morrow (2007, p.213) explains, in the interpretivist paradigm, "researcher values are assumed to exist (and are even embraced), and subjectivity is an integral part of the research".

When it comes to the interview process, the role of the researcher as an interviewer is vital to the study. Among other things, the interviewer "must communicate trust, reassurance and, even, likeableness" (Ackroyd & Hughes, 1992, as cited in Rapley 2004, p.19). Rapley explains that an interviewee who feels comfortable and at ease is likely to speak more easily to the interviewer (Rapley, 2004, p. 19). This is exactly what I set out to achieve during the interviews. However, this goal was not forced or manufactured in any way. Rather, I believe it to be a very natural part of the dialogical exchange between people; we instinctively try to put the other person at ease. This is especially so when the other person is a stranger from whom we are seeking answers pertaining to their experiences, which can sometimes be of a rather personal nature. I believe the rapport during the interviews was natural, positive, and easy with a good amount of anecdotal moments and laughter. As a whole, the participants seemed very relaxed and were able to share their experiences openly. This is critical to the reliability of the data and the outcomes of the study.

### ***3.4 Ethical Considerations***

Before the data collection process began, participants were informed about the general details of the study and asked if they would be willing to participate. They were informed about the purpose of the study and given a rough estimate of how long the interviews would take. All the participants were

formally asked for their permission to participate in the study and were given consent and release forms to review and sign prior to each interview. They were also given the option to stop the interview process or withdraw from the study at any given time.

In order to protect their privacy and ensure anonymity, only their gender and year of study were revealed in the study. They were not asked for their names and were labeled in the transcriptions simply as cases 1 to 5. The audio files, transcriptions, and all other digital documentation were stored in a password protected computer and backed up to a password protected cloud service. The only physical documents in existence are the researcher's copies of the signed permission papers. These are safely stored at the researcher's home and will be withheld from the appendices to further safeguard participant anonymity. Similar efforts at ensuring anonymity and confidentiality are undertaken throughout the thesis, including in the analysis and presentation of the findings. As Flick (2007, p.103) explains, "anonymity and confidentiality are central issues from the angle of ethics – in transcription, in analysis itself, and most of all in presenting results and excerpts from the data". Participants in this study are identified only by their case number in the presentation of findings and in all excerpts. I felt that this was necessary in order to protect the identities of the participants as they are speaking about their experiences in a study programme in which they are still enrolled. Therefore, anonymity is crucial in ensuring that there are no personal repercussions for these students as a result of this study. Furthermore, guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality ensured that the participants felt comfortable enough to speak freely and openly about their experiences.

### **3.5 Limitations**

While every effort was made to conduct and present a well-conceived and robust study, like any similar academic effort, there are some limitations associated with this study. These limitations pertain to the data collection in the study. The first of these has to do with the quantity of the data collected. There were only five interviews in total which constituted the entire data corpus. It might have been better for the strength and reliability of the data as well as the validity of the findings to have had more participants. Nonetheless, it is believed that the five qualitative interviews are sufficient for this case study and will provide reliable and reasonably detailed (albeit limited) results. The second limitation concerns equality of gender representation in the data collected. Out of the five participants, four were female and only one was male. A more equal representation of the genders would have enhanced the balance and robustness of the study and might have even affected the outcome of the study.

## 4 FINDINGS

This chapter presents the detailed findings of this study. It begins with a presentation of the six main categories of data and an explanation of how the findings will be presented. This is followed by a detailed analysis of the data according to each category. The findings will be presented and discussed section by section, both in relation to, as well as from the perspective of, media education as it conceptualized in this thesis and illustrated by the wheel model of media education (Figure 1).

### *4.1 Presenting the Findings*

According to Elo & Kyngäs (2008, p.108), “the outcome of the analysis is concepts or categories describing the phenomenon”. In this study, the outcome or findings are the categories which describe the phenomenon of media education from the perspectives of the participants. These findings will be elaborated in the following sections of this thesis. They will be illustrated using tables and charts, as well as verbatim interview excerpts wherever necessary. ‘Verbatim’ in this study means that words are reported almost exactly as they occur in the audio recordings and transcription, with only minimal editing such as the removal of excessively repeated words. This is in line with White, Woodfield & Ritchie’s (2003) recommendation that, while a small amount of editing to aid comprehension may be needed, quotations should otherwise appear “in their raw unedited form” (2003, p.313). Omitted words are indicated with the use of ellipses, and inserted words (usually translations) are placed in brackets, also as recommended by White et. al. (2003, p.314).

In the interest of being concise and practical, a number of abbreviations will be used when presenting the findings. They are as follows: ME (Media Education), TE (Teacher Education), FNCC14 (Finnish National Core Curriculum 2014), ICT (Information and Communication Technology), MIL (Media and Information Literacy), MULT (Multiliteracy), CML (Critical Media Literacy), LIM (Limited), MOD (Moderate), and N/A (Not Applicable). ‘I’ in the transcript excerpts refers to the ‘Interviewer’ and ‘C’ refers to the ‘Case’ (in other words, the participants). The cases are numbered from 1 through 5. As explained in chapter two of this thesis, ICT competence and ICT skills, as well as ME competencies and ME skills, are used interchangeably depending on which form of the word makes most grammatical sense in context.

The findings will be presented systematically according to each of the main categories. The process of abstraction described in chapter 3 created six main categories from thirteen generic categories. The main categories were labeled using words which encapsulated their essence; according to how the data contained within them related to the participants of the study. They are as follows: ‘Understanding’, ‘Experiences’, ‘Challenges’, ‘Competence’, ‘Needs’, and ‘Opinions’. The color scheme for the figures used in this chapter correspond with the color coding of the main categories as shown below (Figure 3). This was done deliberately, in the interest of clarity and cohesion as well as to facilitate retrieval and cross referencing. The main categories as they were color coded in the analysis, are depicted below:



Figure 3. The Main Categories as Coded by Color

‘Understanding’ refers to the participants’ understanding of media education and its various aspects and contexts. ‘Experiences’ refers to their experiences of media education in the curriculum of their programme as well as in their teaching practice. ‘Challenges’ refers to the challenges they have faced with regards to media education. ‘Competence’ refers to their assessment of their own media education competence. ‘Needs’ refers to perceived personal, curricular, and societal needs for media education. ‘Opinions’ refers to their opinions concerning the presence of media education in the FNCC14, the use of media education in teaching, compulsory media education in their study programme, and what they consider to be the most important topics in media education.

## 4.2 Understanding

Under the main category of ‘Understanding’ there are 3 generic categories: ‘ME as a Concept’, ‘ME in the FNCC14’, and ‘ME in the Curriculum of TE’. These are all illustrated in Figure 4 below:

UNDERSTANDING OF MEDIA EDUCATION					
UNDERSTANDING OF MEDIA EDUCATION	CASE 1	CASE 2	CASE 3	CASE 4	CASE 5
ME AS CONCEPT	MOD-HIGH	MOD-HIGH	MOD	MOD	MOD
ME IN FNCC14	LIM-MOD	LIM-MOD	MOD	MOD	HIGH
ME IN CURRICULUM OF TE	LIMITED	LIMITED	LIMITED	LIMITED	LIMITED

Figure 4. Participants’ Understanding of Media Education

## Understanding of Media Education as a Concept

All of the participants had a reasonably good understanding of media education (ME) as a concept. Each one understood and recognized some aspects and components of ME. If the participant was able to identify aspects of both teaching about and with the media, they were rated as having a high understanding of ME as a concept. If they identified only one aspect of ME, either teaching and learning about the media or only with the media, they were rated as having a moderate understanding of the concept. The criterion for this assessment of their understanding is based on the conceptualization of ME as according to the wheel diagram (Figure 1).

If participants identified only one aspect (either teaching and learning about the media or with the media) but were able to provide some critical details or exhibited a deeper understanding of that aspect of ME, they were rated as having a moderately high understanding of ME. Most participants mentioned ICT skills, critical media literacy (CML) and the use of digital media. Case 4, interestingly, pointed out that ME as he understands it is not learning with the media but rather learning about the media as an entity. This was a contrast to the other participants' understanding of ME. Overall, all participants were able to identify at least some aspects of either teaching with and about the media, or learning with and about the media, as conceptualized in the wheel model of media education (Figure 1). Most participants were able to identify the components of multiliteracy, ICT competence, media literacy, and information literacy as they are illustrated in the wheel model.

## Understanding of Media Education in the FNCC14

The second generic category pertains to their understanding and awareness of ME in the Finnish National Core Curriculum of 2014 (FNCC14). The participants' answers showed a range of variation in this category. Most had some vague recollection of some aspects of ICT or Multiliteracy (MULT) being mentioned in the curriculum, but were not able to provide any specific details. Case 3, however, was aware that ICT integration is encouraged and expected. While most of the participants had a somewhat nebulous understanding of ME in the FNCC14, Case 5 was an exception to this. Unlike the others, she knew and remembered that there are various transversal areas mentioned in the FNCC14 and was able to specifically identify the transversal components of ICT Competence (ICTC) and Multiliteracy (MULT). She even knew where they were ranked on the list of transversal competencies in the FNCC14.

## Understanding of Media Education in the Curriculum of Teacher Education

The most interesting generic category under ‘Understanding’, for the purpose of this study, is the participants’ understanding of ME in the curriculum<sup>36</sup> of Teacher Education (TE). This portion of the interviews yielded some illuminating, albeit somewhat predictable, information. All of the participants had a very limited understanding and awareness of ME in the TE curriculum. Most were unsure whether they had taken any ME courses at all, or if a particular course they had taken was indeed an ME course. Some participants vaguely recalled doing something as part of another course that could be related to media education. The most frequently mentioned of such courses is the ‘Media and Visual Cultures’ course. Most of the participants felt that ME is not obvious nor easily identifiable in the curriculum. They admitted that they had not really given much thought to ME themselves; and neither has it been brought to their attention by the study guide or faculty staff. 4 out of 5 participants were not aware of ME courses as a free choice study option and all said that they had not even considered any ME courses as something they could take as a free choice course.

A major recurring theme throughout the interviews which warrants discussion is that ME in the curriculum seems to be ‘hidden’. This ‘hidden ME’ phenomenon is an issue which came up persistently during each interview. ‘Hidden ME’ refers to the fact that these pre-service teachers had no idea that a particular course, class, or lecture was actually concerning an ME component which can be classified under the broad umbrella term of ME as conceptualized in this study (see Figure1). This harkens back to the cross-disciplinary and multidisciplinary features of media education as conceptualized in this study, which were discussed in the wheel diagram in chapter 2 of this thesis. The data in this study indicates that sometimes ME is so embedded within other subjects and competence areas, and straddles across various other disciplines, that one risks forgetting that what is being taught and learned is indeed ME. Participants do not always identify nor connect the various ME components to ME itself. This also echoes the findings of Ranieri, Bruni & Kupiainen (2018) who encountered similar issues in their research.

For example, Case 4 initially reported that he had not taken any ME courses thus far. However, when I brought up the topic of coding, he informed me that he had just come from a coding class. He did not know that coding is a part of ME. This study found that ME in TE is usually combined with arts education, Finnish language, and math. The following are some excerpts which demonstrates this:

**C3: Because it was like media education, but also art education combined. So, it was maybe only like two credits, but I could look it up.**

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<sup>36</sup> The curriculum in question is the one from 2018/19 academic year.

**C3: Yeah. And actually, we did have, um, one credit worth of coding for kids. But I didn't really like, because it was part of our math section, so I assume that it's just math. So, I guess media subjects can be hidden in our studies. But they just don't have, like the name.**

-----  
**C3: But like we discovered these topics are hidden within each like subject. For instance, now thinking back, like Finnish language, obviously we discussed these topics in there as well.**

-----  
 I: Oh, that was a coding course? Okay. So, there is some...

**C4: Yeah, there is some.**

I: You forgot the coding.

**C4: Yes, yes math.**

I: That would also come under media education

**C4: Okay, so we do have that**

This 'hidden ME' syndrome which the data revealed confirms and echoes some past research which discuss the same issue. For example, Korhonen and Rantala (2007, as cited in Ruokamo et. al. 2016, p.5) claimed that ME in the faculty of education at this university needed to be 'found' and what is evident is "threaded" and "limited". Although Korhonen and Rantala's research concerned purely the curriculum as an entity in and of itself, and this study concerns pre-service teacher students' *perceptions* of the curriculum, the similarities in the findings of the two reveal a pattern which is worth researching further. This threaded and limited ME in need of finding is undeniably how the participants of this study have experienced ME in their programme.

Generally speaking, all the study participants had a decent understanding of ME as a concept, which came as a bit of a surprise because I had presumed that they would not have a good grasp of what ME as a concept actually is. They implicitly understood that ME involves activities surrounding teaching and learning pertaining to the media. However, there were some issues with explicitly identifying and naming various ME components (as named in Figure 1). On the whole, Case 1, 2, 3, and 5 understood ME as teaching and learning about and with the media; which lines up with the Nordic model of ME as conceptualized in the wheel model (Figure 1). Case 4, however, understood ME only as teaching and learning with the media, which is the British model of ME.

All of the participants were able to identify some of the components of ME, whether ICT, MULT, Media Literacy, or Information Literacy. Out of these, ICT and MULT were the most common. I believe that this is due to the presence of these terms in the FNCC14 and their consequent appearance in the literature the participants have come across in their programme. Only one participant was able to identify some of the specifics of ME in the FNCC14. The others only had a vague recollection of ME being mentioned somewhere, or then assumed its presence, in the FNCC14. The findings in this main category echo that of Sauerteig et. al. (2019) who claim that teachers lack a common understanding of ME and the fundamental concepts related to it.

### 4.3 Experiences

The second main category, labelled ‘Experience’, was abstracted from two generic categories: ‘Experience with ME in the TE Curriculum’ and ‘Experience with ME in Teaching Practice’. These categories pertain to the participants’ responses when asked about their experiences in both of these areas. It is important to stress that the findings in this category are based on the experiences and perspectives of the participants as expressed during the interviews and do not necessarily represent the actual reality of the TE programme and curriculum structure. Figure 5 below depicts the participants’ experience of ME across the two generic categories abstracted from the data:

EXPERIENCES WITH MEDIA EDUCATION			
CASE	ME IN TE CURRICULUM	ME IN TEACHING PRACTICE	ESTIMATED CREDITS FROM ME COURSES AT GRADUATION (OUT OF 300 TOTAL)
CASE 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LIMITED</li> <li>INEFFECTIVE</li> <li>LACKED GUIDANCE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HEAVY USE OF ICT &amp; TOOLS</li> <li>PROBLEMS WITH USING ICT</li> </ul>	5 credits
CASE 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NONE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HEAVY USE OF ICT &amp; TOOLS</li> <li>HEAVY USE OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS</li> </ul>	0 credits
CASE 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LIMITED</li> <li>INSUFFICIENT</li> <li>NOT PRIORITIZED</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HEAVY USE OF ICT AND TOOLS</li> </ul>	5 credits
CASE 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LIMITED</li> <li>NOT PRIORITIZED</li> <li>LACKED GUIDANCE</li> <li>LACK OF INTEREST</li> <li>LECTURERS LACKED COMPETENCE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N/A (HAS NOT BEEN IN TEACHING PRACTICE YET)</li> </ul>	15 credits
CASE 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LIMITED</li> <li>LACK OF INTEREST</li> <li>NOT PRIOROTIZED</li> <li>UNAPPEALING</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HEAVY USE OF ICT &amp; TOOLS</li> <li>PROBLEMS WITH USING ICT &amp; DIGITAL PLATFORMS</li> </ul>	0 credits

Figure 5. Participants' Experiences of Media Education

#### Experience of Media Education in the Teacher Education Curriculum

In this generic category, most of the participants’ experiences with ME (as it is conceptualized in this thesis) concern learning *with* the media and involve teaching and learning using ICT. There did not appear to be much experiences relating to learning *about* the media. Furthermore, there were no clear experiences of ME relating to the concepts of MIL, nor MULT, as they were conceptualized in the



wheel model (see Figure 1). Based on this, I concluded that all of the participants have had very limited experiences when it comes to ME in the TE curriculum.

Three out of five participants had experienced some limited form of ME, either as a short course, a section within course, or a lecture in a course. Two of the participants had not taken any ME courses whatsoever. Two had taken 5 credits worth of ME thus far, and the one 1<sup>st</sup> year student estimates he will have taken 15 credits worth by the time he graduates. It cannot be determined if this estimate will hold or if it is merely an overenthusiastic estimate of a first-year student. Regardless, it is staggering to realize how few of the participants' overall credits will actually come from ME courses; in some cases, as little as zero (see Figure 5 above).

In general, all the participants seem to share the view that ME is not prioritized in the programme. It is not given any kind of emphasis from the academia within the programme itself, and there appears to be insufficient guidance when it comes to ME courses. 4 out of 5 students do not remember ME courses ever being recommended as a free choice study option. It also does not seem to be a priority for the students, who view it as an unnecessary, uninteresting, and less relevant subject. Given the large scope and depth of their studies and the fact that they already feel overwhelmed with all the courses they have to take, ME courses have not been viewed as a priority or something they must take. Instead, the participants preferred to take courses on subjects they find more interesting as free choice study options. They do not see ME as a subject that is appealing, exciting, absolutely needed nor relevant. This conundrum is illustrated in the interview excerpts below:

**C5: Uh, just that I don't, I don't think they seem too appealing, for some reason.**

I: Hmm. Okay. And it, do you think because it's boring? Why is it not appealing? How?

**C5: Well it's extra work. And the people who are going to hire you are maybe not that interested in that**

I: In those things, you think?

**C5: Or, but then again, they also at schools, they want people who are good with computers and can fix the stuff for other teachers, because we might not know so much about coding or anything of that sort. Uh, so if you are that guy and you want to, I don't know, plan learning games. Then then you choose these studies maybe. That's quite a narrow group of people.**

-----  
**C5: Um, um, think I think media education is one of those things you should know about, but it's maybe not that interesting.**

The few ME related courses they have taken seem to be outdated, insufficient, impertinent to their needs, lacking relevance and impact, and shallow. The following is an excerpt from the interview with Case 1, which I found it to be quite revealing:

**C1: I just think that it was like not updated because, they...**

I: Like it was not up to date you mean?

**C1: No, it was not up to date. Um, they taught us to use blogs, as like blogging as a tool to like learn.**

I: Okay.

**C1: And I thought that was like, there is something, like more new stuff that I actually don't know about that I would have liked to learn because that was the thing that we used when I was in the school.**

I: Really?

**C1: So, like that kind of thing. It was still, yeah.**

I: So, you felt like it wasn't, like there was something... There was a course, however it wasn't necessarily, um, on par with the times...

**C1: Yes**

I: With the level of technology around you at that particular moment and what was available.

**C1: Yeah, the knowledge seemed to be old...**

I: Okay

**C1: ...to the time that we were, we were at,**

I: Yeah?

**C1: To be honest, yeah.**

Some students discussed how they felt the ME courses they had experienced lacked depth. While there were some ICT related courses where they were taught to use Adobe sketch and other applications, these were not detailed enough and did not explain how to use these tools in a didactic manner. In other words, the participants felt that while they experienced some surface learning on how to use some ICT tools, they were not taught how to use them in teaching; at least not in a meaningful nor in-depth way. This is demonstrated in the following excerpt:

**C3: Yeah. I feel like we often like, you know, they introduce some nice app and are like hey use this, but it's only like, you know, a scratch on the surface. You just sort of learn that oh, okay, this exists. But then how do I actually use it, get it to everyone's phones or iPads? Um, so, yeah. And then you often forget about it because it was just a term thrown out there.**

-----  
**C5: We have been showed some apps we can use when we teach, as tools of teaching. Uh, and we have been shown them we have not been really getting deeply, you know into it just...It's, I think it's a lot down to you what you are prepared to do on your free time.**

It was eye opening to realize that even if a student has technically completed a course with a ME component, it does not necessarily mean that they have actually received the full pedagogical benefit and impact of that ME component. As revealed by Case 1, it is entirely possible to complete a ME related course without actually learning anything directly related to the ME component being taught. For example, in practice, it is quite possible to take a coding class and not learn to do any coding oneself, as shown below:

**C1: And um, well, I took a course. This was, I think this was not compulsory, but coding.**

I: Ah, yes...

**C1: But yeah. Because there were some group tasks in in that course. And the group was divided that the other ones did the actual coding part and the others did...It was a course about um, kids inventing stuff and we had to prepare the thing that they wanted us to do. So, we need to do some käsityö? (Handicraft)...**

**C1: Handicraft, as well as coding. So, I was in the handicraft, and then the others did the coding. We had some mutual teaching, like about the coding, but I never got to do it myself at the class.**

I: Oh. So, wait, if I understand you correctly...so you were given the choice of doing either coding or crafts? No?

**C1: Yeah. Well, it was in between the group that you decide what you do.**

I: Oh, so you didn't get to do the...

**C1: I didn't do the coding. Two of the others did the coding and two the handicraft.**

I: Okay

**C1: I remember a little bit about the, like know the basics, how it works, but I don't remember anything like about the codes, what kind of codes you can use.**

These issues concerning the inadequacies of ME in the curriculum and the possibility that students are not getting the comprehensive training and exposure they require are not inconsequential. In the case of the student above, the fact that she was able to complete a coding course without having learned any coding eventually ended up having some direct repercussions for her when she started teaching. This will be discussed further in section 4.5.

### Experiences of Media Education in Teaching Practice

The second generic category under the main category of 'Experiences' concerns the experiences of the participants during their teaching practice in local schools. From the interviews, it appears that all of the participants' experiences relating to ME in this generic category concern teaching *with* the media. Additionally, their experiences when it comes to teaching with the media seems to be centered around ICT tools and skills. When analyzed against the wheel model of media education (Figure 1), this narrow and singular focus on the ICT component (which is only one component of ME as a whole concept) seems rather limited. As such, I would surmise to say that all the participants have had very limited experiences when it comes to ME (i.e. teaching *about* and *with* the media) in teaching practice.

Four out of five participants had already engaged in teaching practice as part of the practical training they are required to undergo in their programme. Case 4, however, is a 1<sup>st</sup> year student, and thus has not experienced the teaching practice component of TE. All four participants who have been through teaching practice discussed the heavy use of ICT and various digital tools in schools. This emphasis on ICT in schools is not surprising considering that ICT competence is a key transversal area in the FNCC14. Two out of the four participants also mentioned the frequent use of digital platforms. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the teaching practice for Tampere University TE students takes place at schools which are technologically well equipped. The availability and use of technological equipment and facilities is not the same for all schools in Finland. To assume otherwise would be not only simplistic but untrue. As Case 2 notes:

**C2: Well, I think it's, it would be important in the, uh, media education for teachers to also consider the different types of schools and different kinds, types of levels that children are in. Because my experience in that (Kaksio) classroom is really different from many schools in Finland, because there were so many options and so many possibilities.**

This is echoed by Kupiainen (2019) who points out that despite the fact that media literacy is included in the core curriculum, there are significant disparities in media literacy education across school districts in Finland. These disparities are worth keeping in mind when discussing the teaching practice

experiences of pre-service teachers. For example, Case 2 raises the important question of how one is expected to teach under such circumstances:

**C2: So, when I go into a classroom where there is basically nothing, how can I teach media education? Or how, because it's so different? So, not only when you have these (tools) and how to use these tools, but when you don't have these tools, how do you do it? So, I think that would also be interesting, uh, important.**

These are some dilemmas and challenges which need to be examined and considered when it comes to ME in the training of future teachers. On the flipside of this, Case 1 and Case 5 shared some challenges they faced in using ICT and digital platforms in the highly digital environments they were operating in. These will be discussed further in the next section.

As a whole, the participants' experiences of ME seem to mostly concern teaching and learning *with* the media, and less to do with teaching and learning *about* the media. Their experiences also seem to center around the ME component of ICT competence. It could not be determined with certainty why there is a distinct lean towards ICT. Perhaps it is because the most dominant presence of ME in schools and in the TE curriculum is in the form of ICT. Almost every time ME is mentioned, it is in an ICT context: often relating to the use of software, tools, and equipment. MIL was also mentioned rather often, but not as much as ICT. There was hardly any mention of MULT, which is intriguing considering it is the other ME component featured in the FNCC14. In any case, the data indicates that the participants' experience with learning about and with the media is rather limited. They do not appear to have received much training when it comes to ME, whether in the form of ICT or MIL. This does not bode well for the future of ME in classrooms because research indicates that the experiences of teacher students with ME in their training programmes influences how they eventually choose to use ME in their teaching (Instefjord, 2015). It was enlightening to realize how limited the participants' experience with ME has been within their programme; how few ME courses they have taken or are planning to take, and how little ME is integrated into other courses. It was disheartening to hear how they viewed ME as boring and unappealing. Perhaps more could be done to make ME more relevant, exciting, and relatable as a topic. It was surprising to hear that ME is not prioritized, nor promoted, within the programme. Further research is needed to determine whether this is indeed the status quo of ME in TE, or if this is merely the perception of TE students.

## 4.4 Challenges

PERSONAL & PRACTICAL CHALLENGES WITH MEDIA EDUCATION				
CASE 1	CASE 2	CASE 3	CASE 4	CASE 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FELT LOST</li> <li>• FELT EMBARRASSED</li> <li>• FELT INCOMPETENT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FELT PRESSURE TO USE ICT</li> <li>• ME NOT ALWAYS HELPFUL</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ONLINE SAFETY &amp; BEHAVIOR</li> <li>• PROBLEMS WITH ICT</li> <li>• EQUIPMENT PROBLEMS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NONE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NOT USED TO NEW DIGITAL METHODS</li> </ul>

Figure 6. Participants' Challenges with ME in Teaching Practice

The main category of 'challenges' refers to the challenges related to ME which the participants faced during their teaching practice. There are two generic categories in this main category. One generic category concerns personal challenges with ME in teaching and the other concerns practical challenges with ME in teaching. Both are condensed in Figure 6 above. During the interviews, it was discovered that four out of five of the participants have had some teaching experience in a school as part of their teaching practice. All pre-service TE students at the university are required to undergo practical training in the form of teaching practice beginning from their second year of study. Being a first-year student, Case 4 was the only participant who had not yet experienced teaching practice. Thus, he was not able to provide any information relating to this category. All four participants who had undergone teaching practice reported some challenges relating to ME in their teaching practice.

### Personal Challenges in Teaching Practice

The personal challenges that the participants faced in teaching practice had mostly to do with negative feelings concerning their own perceived competencies and capabilities. These range from feeling lost, unprepared, and unsure, to feeling embarrassed about their perceived lack of competence. Case 1 probably had the most to say concerning these challenges, perhaps because she has had the most experience with teaching practice out of all the participants. She was in her 6<sup>th</sup> year of study, was close to graduating, and had also recently started teaching full time. She openly shared about her struggles with doing basic things related to ICT. She talked about feeling lost and embarrassed when it came to the use of technological equipment and software programmes in the classroom; from smart boards to electronic devices to software applications.

**C1: I would have needed, or I think, and I, like just all that like different ways to use media as a way like to use media in teaching all the different ways. I think that would be good. Cos now when we went to, to do our teaching practice, there was all these things around us and I had no idea how they work**

I: Oh, really? What kind of things? I'm curious to know

**C1: Like smart boards. I didn't know when I went there, I didn't know how they work**

I: How to operate, oh, really?

**C1: Yeah! I had to ask from the, of course I learned there, from the teaching teacher who guided me, a little bit, but I still don't know what all the things you can do with the smart board.**

I: Oh

**C1: That I don't know.**

I: Well, I don't either.

**C1: You don't either? For example, that, like it would have been very useful to have some kind of introduction to the tools that schools nowadays have.**

-----  
**C1: Yeah. Well, they had of course, iPads and stuff like that, but they had programs. I don't remember which ones, but programs that I didn't know about...**

Referring to coding, which was mentioned in section 4.4, she confided about feeling incompetent when it comes to knowing how to teach the students coding during her teaching practice:

**C1: I think that would be helpful because they start teaching coding from the first grade. Of course, it's not, it's only like giving directions to the friend, just to realize how it works.**

I: Yeah

**C1: ...But I think it would have been really useful because now when I go to sixth grade, I have no idea how to teach that topic because...**

I: Yeah,

**C1: I, I don't know much about it, so I have to self-learn to do it.**

I: Yes. So, you feel that maybe you would have perhaps benefited from a little more of um, teaching related to coding, for example?

**C1: Definitely.**

Case 2 shared about feeling pressured to use ICT, and especially devices, in teaching. She felt that the use of ICT may not always be helpful and that it might even be detrimental sometimes:

**C2: ...And it's not that you always have to use like that. When sometimes I feel that in in teaching, it's a pressure. Now we have to be all digital and use all these fancy devices that we have. Sometimes it's not necessary or it's not, it might be even worse to use that. So, when after a few days, you get to really thinking on your own. Like, when is it necessary, when is it good?**

This phenomenon whereby a teacher “feels compelled to increase the educational use of ICT” has been termed by some as ‘technostress’ (Mertala, 2018, p.80). All four cases who have had some experience with teaching practice reported some form of this technostress. To some degree, they all questioned the actual need for, and effectiveness of, using ICT in the classroom. Most felt that there was a somewhat heavy use of ICT, perhaps even unnecessarily so.

## Practical Challenges in Teaching Practice

Case 3 talked about struggling to figure out which sites and sources are appropriate when it comes to teaching children and said that sometimes the traditional book-based methods are easier:

**C3: Yeah, well, obviously like, um, we taught fifth grade and they were really, well, or we were more like struggling with, um, what sources can we use for the kids? Can we just be like, ok, Google this? Like it didn't feel right. So, it was really hard to like, um, choose the websites we wanted them to access and go on to and um, gather information from. And also, like how do we get them to go on the right websites fast, like using the equipment. They were pretty familiar with it, but there's always problems with technology. And yeah, so there were problems and a lot of questions that we had to think of. And I feel like sometimes it would just have been easier to, you**

**know, do it the traditional way, like read from your textbook and such...**

She also talked about broken or faulty devices and equipment which often resulted in shortage, thereby requiring students to share these in the classroom. Case 5 also referred to this:

**C5: It would be even nicer if the computers and tablets at schools would actually work.**

She further explained that digital devices can sometimes be problematic in the classroom and that she needed the skills to address this.

**C5: It can be problematic in the everyday life. If the group is, you know, wild. Um, or if they are not too motivated, especially with older kids I think it's a bit tricky maybe. They might be doing something they are not supposed to do.**

This is an important part of a teacher's skills in Finland as they are expected to handle general educational matters such as manners and bullying, and as Vesterinen (2011, p.34) elaborates "in media education, these general educational questions can be seen as something that comes about through media, too, and, one way or another, this new substance must be handled by the teacher".

Case 5 also openly shared that she felt she was not used to the digital way things are done today and considers herself a more traditional person. She mentioned that although she is personally interested in digital games for example, they are too much for her to handle in a pedagogical context. The challenges the participants faced are purportedly common challenges faced by other TE students as well. Case 1 explained that many of her fellow course mates have been through similar experiences:

**C1: Um, well, that thing that I know that many others thinks the same way, that like they feel lost when they go to a school. Like I have no idea how that works.**

I: So this experience, um, your your personal experience is something that is, that you find is shared by your other course mates as well. So, other students who are studying teacher education have shared with you that yes, this we have had similar experiences.

**C1: Yeah, this is like a topic in our discussions. When we talk about the difficulties that we face. Because we share about our days and like "Aargh today, I didn't know how to, I had no idea how to use that or what to do, how to teach it to them". And yeah, we share that.**

Overall, the participants' personal challenges appear to all be related to feeling unprepared and inadequate. A perceived lack of competence and skills when it comes to teaching with and about the media seemed to be driving this feeling and creating a sense of insecurity. This perceived lack of preparedness and know-how seemed to be especially true when it comes to the ME components of ICT competence and MIL. The participants faced challenges with teaching using various ICT tools and software. The data also indicates that there is some resistance and unwillingness when it comes to incorporating ICT into the classroom, particularly when it concerns digital tools (both hardware and software). This is partly due to the perceived inadequateness of their own ICT competence as well as doubts about the need for ICT as a pedagogical tool and questions about its effectiveness. The personal and practical challenges the participants faced seem more pronounced in the area of ICT competence. This might be due to the fact that Finnish schools are putting an emphasis on ICT;

investing in digital tools and promoting the use of ICT, perhaps in response to the FNCC14 requirements. This increased use of ICT in teaching then becomes a source of technostress for teacher students during the course of their teaching practice. Also, unless teachers are properly trained in ME, merely increasing the presence of ICT in the classroom will not guarantee the effective teaching of ME. As Frau-Meiggs & Torrent (2009, p.18-19) explain:

“Bringing expensive ICTs within the curriculum won’t lead to any efficient results if longstanding traditions of teaching are not enriched with cognitive competences among teachers even before among students.”

Another issue worth considering when discussing ICT competence in teaching and learning with the media is the relatively rapid rate of change in technology, especially when compared to the slower rate at which the curriculum is updated and implemented (see also Vesterinen, 2011). With equipment, software, and applications constantly being updated and changing, it is no wonder that teacher students are facing challenges when it comes to teaching with the media. This begs the question of what exactly teacher students should be taught when it comes to teaching and learning with an ever-evolving media. Is there any point or value in teaching them how to use ICT tools (such as apps and equipment) which will likely be phased out or obsolete by the time they graduate? This is definitely food for thought, and a dilemma that pre-service TE curriculum designers need to solve.

The participants also faced challenges in teaching their students about the various aspects of media literacy and information literacy, particularly from a critical standpoint. They reported being unsure about how to direct their students to the correct and appropriate sites, digital materials, and sources when needed. Some spoke candidly about feeling unequipped for the task because they themselves were struggling with source reliability, authenticity, and appropriateness. This is an important issue, especially at a time when critical MIL is fundamentally vital in society. As Kellner & Share (2007, p.1) argue:

“In the interest of a vibrant participatory democracy, educators need to move the beyond the stage of debating whether or not critical media literacy should be taught, and instead focus energy and resources on exploring the best ways for implementing it.”

The above should also be true when it comes to the education of future teachers. We need to teach our teachers critical ICT and MIL competence, including how to use them in a didactic manner.

All of these personal and practical challenges are worth further consideration and investigation. In building a comprehensive and competent education system which includes ME as an integral element, it is crucial that the training programmes for future teachers take into serious consideration the challenges that teachers face in real classroom situations when it comes to teaching with and about the media.



## 4.5 Competence

This main category concerns how the participants assessed their own ICT and MIL competencies. It contains two generic categories, one pertaining to the participants' assessment of their own ICT competence, and the other to their assessment of their own MIL competence. Although there were no questions in the interviews which directly asked the participants to assess their own ME competence, the line of inquiry and resulting discussions inadvertently revealed how the participants viewed their own ICT and MIL abilities. It is vital, when presenting the findings of this study, to include the participants own views and perceptions of their own ME competence, specifically when it comes ICT and MIL competence. While on the surface this main category might appear somewhat irrelevant to this study, it is an important element in the data and plays a key role in answering the research question posed at the beginning of this thesis. This is because it emerged throughout the course of the interviews that the perceived individual ICT and MIL competence of the participants had a direct correlation to how they perceived the presence of ME as well as the necessity for ME in their programme. In other words, their own competences and capabilities have an effect on, influence, and correlate with how they view ME within their programme. The data indicates that participants who perceive themselves as having high ME competence seem to generally have a positive opinion of ME in their programme compared to those who view themselves as having low ME competence. The participants who perceive themselves as having a high level of ICT and MIL competence seem inclined towards feeling that there is enough ME in their programme and that they do not necessarily need any extra support or training in the area of ME, compared to those who do not. As Instefjord (2015) explains, if a person rates their own competence as very high, they then do not see much need for enhancing their competence.

### Assessment of Own ICT Competence

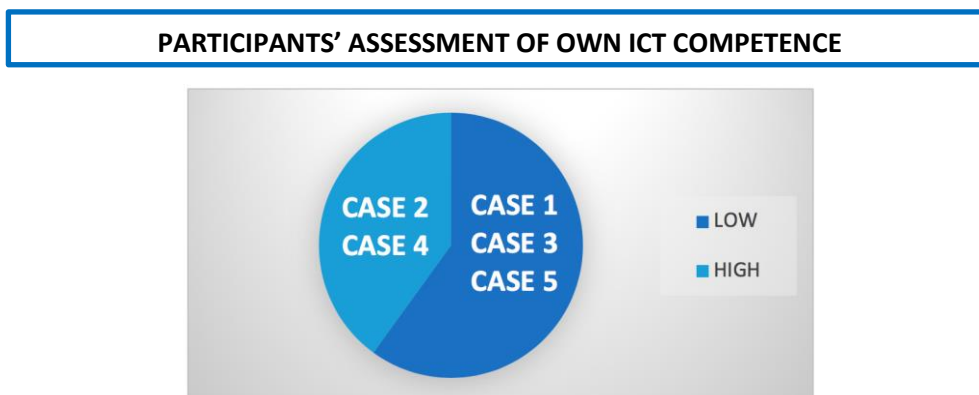


Figure 7. Participants' Assessment of Their Own ICT Competence

The first generic category under the main category of 'Competence' is the participants' assessment of their own ICTC, as depicted in Figure 7 above. Case 2 and 4 felt that they had a high level of competence when it comes to their ICT capabilities. Conversely, Cases 1, 3 and 5 felt that they had a low level of competence. Case 2 and 4 were confident in their ICT skills and felt very comfortable with ICT tools and equipment. However, they pointed out that this was not a result of the training provided in their programme, but rather due to their own personal abilities prior to, and apart from, their university education. They acknowledged that while this is not an issue for them, it might be a challenge for others who may not have similar abilities.

**C2: ...I think, depends on like in individual level, because I feel like I'm pretty good with that kind of things and I learn quickly. But then on the other hand with some other students, it might be a completely different case. They're not, they would need more. Because I feel like we haven't had that much training in our program. But that's fine for me...**  
-----

**C4: But is there enough teaching for everyone? I think it's a hard question to answer...So, I think I would not have a problem, but someone who doesn't, you know, necessarily use that, all that amount of time, like their free time fiddling around with this...I'm not sure that they will get the tools that they maybe need to have.**

The other cases very openly described their incompetence with even some of the most basic ICT skills teachers need in classrooms today, such as using digital and electronic technical classroom equipment, operating with Excel and Power Point, and making videos.

**C1: (Referring to her students) I think they know more than me, already. So maybe it's like maybe they can be the teachers and teach me first and then I can teach them or yeah, not really good. Yeah, I think that's the situation: that kids today are more aware, and they have the knowledge to use, yeah, the digital media like they do it better than the teachers in most cases.**  
-----

**C1: Yeah, that kind of thing is affecting to the day-to-day teaching life. If you don't know how to use the equipment, you can't really teach.**  
-----

**C3: ...Especially for me, I'm really bad with technology in general, and really like insecure when it comes to using just like, well Power Point for instance. So, or Excel would maybe be a better, like example.**  
-----

**C3: Well I've been super surprised with how much Excel is used for instance. Like that is something I'm really struggling with but that is something like a really helpful tool that if I were able to use that would save me a ton of time.**  
-----

**C5: That's why I would be into some sort of how to...I don't know how to even make a video. I don't know how to do that. And that's quite lame.**

Case 4 also brought up the low ICT competence of some lecturers he had encountered. He described instances where lecturers themselves were struggling with the equipment during classes and needed help with microphones and other paraphernalia.

**C4: But uh, but I mean, but looking at some of the lecturers that we have, they seem to be like challenged when they're using technical like computers and stuff. So, you need to go and solve the problems for them so the lecture can go on, for example.**

## Assessment of Own Media and Information Literacy Competence

PARTICIPANTS' ASSESSMENT OF OWN MIL COMPETENCE				
CASE 1	CASE 2	CASE 3	CASE 4	CASE 5
HIGH	MODERATE	MODERATE	HIGH	MOD-HIGH

Figure 8. Participants' Assessment of Their Own MIL Competence

The second generic category pertains to the participants' assessment of their own MIL competence, and is depicted in Figure 8 above. The participants had somewhat varying opinions on this, but most rated their MIL skills as moderate or high. All of them talked about ME from a critical perspective and felt that they had a good understanding of proper and safe online behavior, how to use sources, and think critically about the media, as evidenced by the excerpt below:

**C4: Because I think I do a lot of the sort of like, you know, I consume a lot of media with, I think enough prejudice that I know what's not legit and what is.**

-----

**C5: I um, I'm quite interested in communication. And, um, technology to some extent. And I keep up with the news every day and I'm trying to be critical.**

Nonetheless, all the participants felt that critical MIL is something that they would like to learn more about and should undoubtedly be included in their curriculum. This was especially so when it came to their desire to learn more about the didactic elements of how to teach MIL. All of the participants felt that they needed more training and guidance when it comes to teaching about the media from a critical perspective.

The participants' own assessment of their ICT and MIL competence is a key piece of the puzzle when it comes to the findings of this study because these influence their perceptions with regards to every single main category of the findings in this study. Their perceived self-competence has an impact on their understanding, experiences, challenges, needs, and opinions with regards to learning and teaching about and with the media. The participants had varying degrees of competence, with MIL Competence generally ranked higher than ICT competence. Interestingly, all of the participants reported that their competence had already been acquired before beginning their study programme, and is not a result of the education received within the programme. This means that ME competence is not an even playing field as the starting point can vary greatly between individual teacher students. Down the road, this could lead to inequality for their students (which will be discussed in section 4.7 of this thesis), and a dissonance between mastery and appropriation as revealed by Instefjord in her research (2015).

## 4.6 Needs

This main category pertains to the participants' responses concerning the need for ME in the TE curriculum as well as in Finnish society in general. It contains three generic categories: the need for ME in the TE curriculum, the type of ME courses needed, as well as the need for ME in Finland.

### Need for Media Education in the Curriculum of Teacher Education

The first generic category describes the participants' assessment of the need for ME in the TE curriculum and is depicted in Figure 9 below.

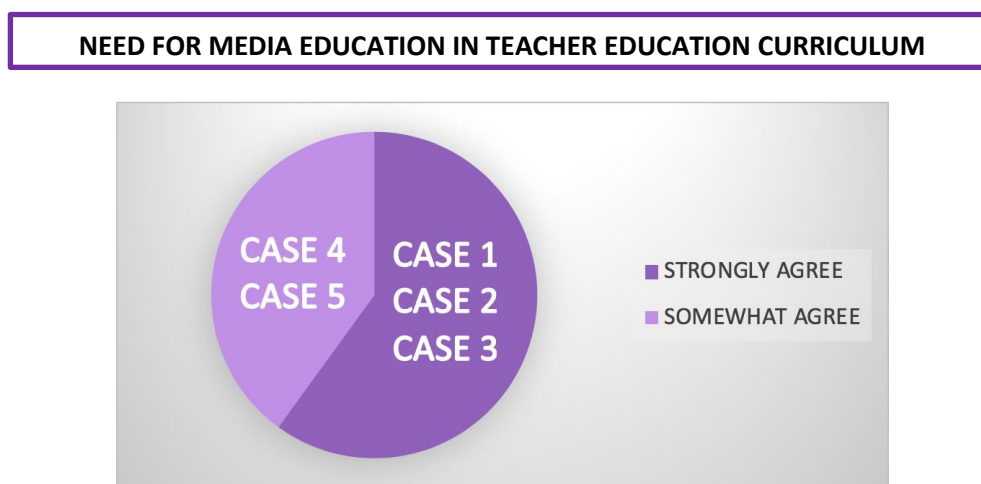


Figure 9. Participants' Assessment of the Need for ME in TE Curriculum

All five cases agreed that there is a need for ME in the TE curriculum. Cases 1, 2 and 3 felt very strongly about this and Cases 4 and 5 agreed with some reservations. Cases 1, 2, and 3 felt that ME is absolutely essential and much needed in TE. Case 4 felt that he personally did not need any ME courses since he perceived himself as having enough ICT and MIL competencies. However, he pointed out that other course mates who were not as media savvy as himself would definitely need some ME courses. Case 5 felt that ME was not “the basics” in TE, and that there is simply not enough time in the programme to fit in all the necessary ME courses. Nonetheless, she made it clear that this does not mean that ME is not needed; but rather she had some doubts about how it would be integrated into the curriculum. Ironically, when asked about what type of ME courses might be needed in TE, she came up with more specific types of courses compared to the other participants (see Figure 10).

## Type of Media Education Courses Needed

The second generic category pertains to the participants' responses when they were asked what type of ME courses would be needed in their curriculum. These are courses which they felt they would need themselves, or that others in their programme would benefit from.

TYPE OF MEDIA EDUCATION COURSES NEEDED				
CASE 1	CASE 2	CASE 3	CASE 4	CASE 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PRACTICAL ICT COURSES</li> <li>• CRITICAL MIL COURSES</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• THEORETICAL COURSES</li> <li>• CRITICAL MIL COURSES</li> <li>• PRACTICAL COURSES</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GENERAL ICT SKILLS COURSES</li> <li>• PRACTICAL COURSES</li> <li>• IN-DEPTH COURSES</li> <li>• CRITICAL MIL COURSES</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• INTEGRATED ME COURSES</li> <li>• CRITICAL MIL COURSES</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VISUAL MEDIA AND METHODS COURSES</li> <li>• DIGITAL ART COURSES</li> <li>• GRAPHIC DESIGN COURSES</li> <li>• GAME BASED LEARNING COURSES</li> </ul>

Figure 10. Participants' Views on the Type of ME Courses Needed in TE

As illustrated in Figure 10 above, the courses they suggested ranged from ICT skills courses to critical MIL courses and covered a wide spectrum of both. For example, the ICT courses suggested included basic 'how to' courses relating to the use of equipment and tools as well as software applications and programmes. They also included both intermediate and advanced 'how to' courses, such as in-depth programming, coding, and didactic courses on how to use various applications in teaching. Game based learning, visual media, graphic design, and digital art courses were also mentioned as examples of courses that are needed in TE which the participants would like to have had the opportunity to take. Critical MIL courses also featured prominently as a course genre that is needed in TE, with 4 out of 5 participants mentioning a significant need for it. The suggested topics for critical MIL courses included online safety, responsible online behavior, digital citizenship, ethical media use, and critical media literacy pertaining to fake news and misinformation. What was surprising is that some participants (Case 2 in particular) expressed an interest in, and a need for, more theory-based ME courses. It was not anticipated that the participants would be interested in a deeper understanding of ME theories, let alone perceive it as a need in the TE programme.

## The Need for Media Education in Finland

The third generic category under the main category of 'Needs' pertains to the participants' perceptions of why ME is needed in Finland. When asked about this, the participants brought up various issues and factors, as illustrated in Figure 11 below.

THE NEED FOR MEDIA EDUCATION IN FINLAND				
CASE 1	CASE 2	CASE 3	CASE 4	CASE 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HEAVY EMPHASIS IN SCHOOLS</li> <li>• EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS</li> <li>• COMBAT MIS-INFORMATION</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pervasiveness of media</li> <li>• Growing influence of media in young people's lives</li> <li>• Young age of media users</li> <li>• Societal challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pervasiveness of digital technology</li> <li>• Need for critical media literacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for critical media literacy</li> <li>• Lack of future talents for workforce</li> <li>• Psychological effects of social media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for critical media literacy</li> <li>• Lack of proper dialogue</li> <li>• Media bubbles</li> <li>• Cyber safety</li> <li>• School dropouts</li> <li>• Societal marginalization</li> </ul>

Figure 11. Participants' Views on the Need for ME in Finland

The most prominent of these are the prevalence of digital media in Finnish society today as well as the growing and urgent need for CML. The participants highlighted the importance of CML in light of recent political developments, such as the debates over multiculturalism. Foreign interference in elections and cyber-attacks were also mentioned. From the participants' perspectives, CML is also needed as an antidote to the modern-day maladies of news and media bubbles, fake news, and misinformation. The participants also had some thoughtful insights on the need for ME in meeting the demand for future digital talents as well as addressing the issue of school dropout. The following excerpt is an example of this:

**C4: ...they're always talking about, that we need more like coders and stuff. Like there's a lack of people who know how to code or whatever. So, I guess if there's a lack of it, then probably would be good to teach kids about it more. So, perhaps since, if those are the jobs of tomorrow, then that obviously means that we should, you know, prepare kids for those jobs, I guess.**

The findings of the three generic categories of data in this main category indicate that the participants perceive a real need for ME in TE. They either recognized that need in themselves, or then in other fellow students. When it came to the type of ME courses needed, they listed an extensive array of courses from a variety of ME disciplines; encompassing the critical, technical, and theoretical aspects of ME. It was encouraging to observe that there seemed to be an emphasis on the perceived need for critical MIL courses and practical 'how to' courses related to ICT competence. The participants also voiced a need for more theoretical and in-depth courses. A bigger variety of in-depth ME courses would undeniably be beneficial for the simple reason that ME is such a broad and multi-dimensional field that it requires an appropriate share of space in the curriculum. Yet, as the interviews revealed, merely introducing new courses is neither a simple nor straightforward solution to increasing competence in ME. As will be discussed in section 4.7, standalone ME courses are not the only way forward for the TE curriculum and transversal ME course options should also be considered.

The participants also perceived a critical need for ME in Finland and provided an extensive number of reasons why ME is needed in Finnish society today. Many of these needs were in a critical MIL context and pertained to the need to be an informed and critical media user. The participants perceived a need in Finnish society for teaching and learning about the media in a manner which is critical and reflective; touching on topics such as digital citizenship, participation, and agency, without explicitly mentioning or perhaps even being aware of these elements of ME.

#### 4.7 Opinions

The final category of findings to be presented is labeled ‘Opinions’. This main category refers to the opinions of the participants concerning the following generic categories: ME in the FNCC14, ME in teaching, the important topics in ME, and whether ME should be compulsory in the TE curriculum.

##### Opinions on Media Education in the FNCC14

OPINION ON MEDIA EDUCATION IN THE FNCC14				
CASE 1	CASE 2	CASE 3	CASE 4	CASE 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEEDED</li> <li>• NOT CURRENTLY COMPULSORY</li> <li>• PERHAPS UNNECESSARY</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GOOD FOR CURRENT MEDIA ENVIRONMENT</li> <li>• NECESSARY IN SCHOOL</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MAKES A LOT OF SENSE</li> <li>• FOSTERS IMPORTANT SKILLS</li> <li>• NOT VERY RELEVANT (CURRICULUM SUBJECT TO CHANGE)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEEDED</li> </ul>

Figure 12. Participants' Opinions on ME in the FNCC14

The first generic category pertains to the participants’ opinions on ME in the FNCC14, and is depicted in Figure 12 above. Most participants said that including ME in the FNCC14 was the right thing to do. They felt that it was necessary and sensible given the current media environment as well as the present and future needs of students. However, Case 4 pointed out that he does not consider the FNCC14 as relevant because there will be a new curriculum in place by the time he graduates (the Finnish National Core Curriculum changes every 10 years and a new one is scheduled to be introduced in 2024). Regardless, he acknowledged that ME would likely have a presence and play an important role in the future national core curriculum because of the media environment we live in. There is no data for Case 3 in this generic category because this question was accidentally skipped during that particular interview.

## Opinions on Media Education in Teaching

The next generic category pertains to participants' opinions about the use of ME in teaching, and is illustrated in Figure 13 below. Although the interview questions did not initially include asking the participants to evaluate and weigh in on the use of media in teaching, these elements came up during the interviews and were probed further.

OPINION ON MEDIA EDUCATION IN TEACHING				
CASE 1	CASE 2	CASE 3	CASE 4	CASE 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CONCERN FOR TRADITIONAL LITERACY</li> <li>• OVEREMPHASIZED</li> <li>• UNNECESSARY USE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PRESSURE TO USE ME &amp; DIGITAL TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT</li> <li>• SOMETIMES UNNECESSARY</li> <li>• DIGITAL TOOLS &amp; EQUIPMENT SOMETIMES DETRIMENTAL</li> <li>• INEQUALITY OF ACCESS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TRADITIONAL METHODS SOMETIMES BETTER</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CHILDREN ARE NOT HIGHLY COMPETENT IN ME</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ME IS NOT THE BASICS</li> <li>• ME CAN BE INTEGRATED</li> <li>• CML SHOULD BE TAUGHT</li> <li>• CONCERN FOR TRADITIONAL LITERACY</li> </ul>

Figure 13. Participants' Opinions on ME in Teaching

The data revealed that many of the participants shared the same concern for traditional forms of literacy, which was elucidating. Some even felt that they preferred traditional methods over digital methods when it comes to teaching in the classroom. Most questioned if the use of digital tools and methods was really necessary. Almost all felt that there is an overemphasis on all things digital and an implicit pressure to use ICT and digital tools in teaching. Some of the participants felt that this was sometimes done without clear purpose or direction. This might seem contradictory to the needs expressed in section 4.6 but that is not exactly the case. The various needs for ME which the participants expressed are based on the status quo of the FNCC14 and the curriculum of their own study programme. These are perceived needs that arise as a result of the requirements of the FNCC14 (and thus their future occupation), and the perceived inadequacy of ME within the TE curriculum. Since ICT is part of the FNCC14 and thus emphasized to some extent in the classroom, most participants felt that more training and education in ICT related competencies are needed. However, this does not necessarily mean that they think ICT should have a major role in classroom pedagogical practices. This generic category reveals that the participants expressed some doubts, skepticism, and perhaps even resistance, towards teaching and learning with *digital* media in the classroom.



### Opinions on Important Topics in Media Education

OPINION ON THE IMPORTANT TOPICS IN MEDIA EDUCATION				
ICT	MIL	CYBER SECURITY	DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP	GAME BASED LEARNING
CASE 1 CASE 3 CASE 4 CASE 5	CASE 1 CASE 2 CASE 3 CASE 4 CASE 5	CASE 4	CASE 5	CASE 5

Figure 14. Participants' Opinions on the Important Topics in ME

The third generic category under 'Opinions' concerns the topics that the participants considered to be important in ME. As illustrated in Figure 14 above, the most important ME topics according to the participants are ICT and critical MIL; with ICT leading slightly. This is unsurprising given how frequently these ME components were mentioned in the interviews. Almost every time an ME topic surfaced in the data, it was related to either ICT or MIL. Interestingly enough, this coincides with the "focus on IT-based media competences" that Korhonen & Rantala observed when analyzing the curriculum of TE in Finland (2007, as cited in Ruokamo et. al. 2016). It is unclear whether this strong lean towards ICT is a result of the national curriculum itself, and what is consequently emphasized in schools and within TE, or whether it is the common practices and trends in general society which influence the curriculum.

There were three other topics which the participants also considered important. They are, in alphabetical order, Cyber Security, Digital Citizenship, and Game Based Learning. These were considered equally important according to the data; each occurring with the same frequency as the other. All five of the topics (ICT, Critical MIL, Cyber Security, Digital Citizenship, and Game Based Learning) are representative of the type of topics that pre-service teacher students perceive as important in their education. More importantly, these are the topics which they think they need to prioritize when teaching their own students in the future.

### Opinions on Compulsory Media Education in Teacher Education

OPINION ON COMPULSORY ME IN THE TE CURRICULUM					
STRONGLY AGREE	CASE 1	CASE 2	CASE 3		CASE 5
CAUTIOUSLY AGREE				CASE 4	

Figure 15. Participants' Opinions on Compulsory ME in TE Curriculum

The final generic category under the main category of ‘Opinions’ has to do with the participants’ opinions on whether ME should be compulsory in the TE curriculum. This is the last data set to be presented in this study. As shown in Figure 15 above, all the participants agreed unanimously that ME in the TE curriculum should be compulsory. Cases 1, 2, 3, and 5 strongly agreed that it should be compulsory while Case 4 agreed cautiously. Case 1 and 3 suggested that ME should be compulsory even before the question about compulsory ME was posed. When discussing compulsory ME, these were some of the responses:

**C1: I would like it to be compulsory, because now I don't feel like I'm, I have all the knowledge that I should have in order to teach the kids or working or like acting in social media and in like anywhere in the world at the moment...**  
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**C2: Yes, I think there should be because if I can't remember that we had any in these four years.**  
-----

**C3: Yeah, I feel like I would like to see more compulsory courses offered because I do have to admit that like all of us have a ton of interests... So, if those courses are mandatory, we will definitely you know, participate and learn from them. So, I think that would be really useful.**

Case 2 made a compelling point when she reasoned that those who are interested in and aware of the issues relating to ME may probably already be taking ME courses on their own, whereas those who really need it would probably not take any ME courses unless they are compulsory. That was a thought-provoking observation which is worth consideration. Case 1 brought up another point worth contemplating which is the idea that varying ME competence levels among pre-service teachers would be unfair to their future students and ultimately lead to a form of inequality. The following is the exchange in which this matter was raised:

I: Um, why do you think it should be made compulsory? Do you feel like people wouldn't take these courses if they weren't?

**C1: I think it's because there might be some people who don't take them. So, then it would be, like, it would be inequality.**

I: Uh, it would not be equal?

**C1: Equal situation for all the students, like the teachers wouldn't have the same kind of preparation for to teach them.**

This was interpreted to mean that the absence of compulsory ME courses could lead to an inequality of mastery; which would then lead to an inequality of appropriation. I must admit that I had not really given any thought to this issue prior to the interviews. All along, I had been thinking from the perspective of future teachers, but what I had failed to do was to think from the perspective of future students. I had not seen the phenomenon I was studying through the eyes of a child, but this study changed that. Teachers should have equal and fair opportunities in their training and education for the sake of the children they will someday teach. Anything less would be unfair and, yes, inequal. This form of inequality has been discussed in literature pertaining to media education in Finland. For example, Kupiainen (2018, p.5, citing Kotilainen & Kupiainen, 2012) claims that there are

“inequalities in the preparation of teachers to provide media literacy education among teacher training programs in universities”.

Circling back, the one case in which there was cautious agreement with the idea of compulsory ME deserves some clarification. Case 4’s reservations came from his concern about whether compulsory ME would only add to the burden of the pre-service teacher students and result in longer programme durations or more strenuous workloads. He agreed that, in principle, ME should be compulsory; but only if it means that something more “useless” is taken out.

**C4: So, the thing is if we just keep stuffing more and more stuff into this, I mean we're just gonna be exhausted and have and then we don't have like time to actually like put the information in our heads, you know. It's like then we're just doing the courses for like barely surviving not enough time to think about the whole picture, and what we're studying it would just turn into this mess. So sure. But if that means that something more useless, so to speak, is taken out.**

It would appear that this is a common dilemma and challenge when it comes to the curriculum of TE. There are so many subjects and courses considered critically important in the training of future teachers and, therefore, the curriculum as it stands is already loaded to the brim. The course loads and workloads for students are heavy and demanding, with the curricular guides and teaching schedules filled with essential (and mandatory) pedagogy-based courses. Where and how to fit equally critical ME components into the curriculum in an optimal and sensible manner is a puzzle which deserves some time and attention. Conversely, there are also subjects and courses offered in the TE curriculum which are perceived as non-essential and superfluous from the perspective of teacher students. For instance, Case 3 describes her disappointment and dissatisfaction with a compulsory course she had to take relating to a subject which she considers less pertinent and non-essential compared to ME:

**C3: So, it like does make me wonder like why are we doing this? You know playing around. Drama isn't even part of like the Finnish curriculum, really. And then we don't have like media education courses. So, I feel like they should maybe reconsider some of like the courses they are offering as mandatory.**

The majority of participants who strongly agree with compulsory ME felt that most of their fellow students would not take any ME courses if it was completely up to them. This is due to a number of reasons such as a lack of awareness and understanding of the importance, relevance, and practical applications of ME, the sheer constraints of time and workloads, and the fact that there are so many other courses competing for their interest. Ultimately, these are the challenges and factors which need to be seriously considered when analyzing, reviewing, or attempting to change the TE programme.

Overall, the participants had positive views about the presence of ME in the FNCC14. Almost all were of the opinion that ME should be present in the national curriculum. However, their opinions about how ME is present in their programme and in schools were more critical. Although participants

saw a clear need for ME in their programme and society in general (as evidenced in section 4.6), they questioned the heavy emphasis on ICT in classrooms, for example. While MIL and MULT are perceived as important, all of the participants displayed some level of skepticism about teaching and learning with ICT in schools. Most felt that teaching critical MIL can also be accomplished with more traditional forms of media such as books, newspapers, and other print media. There seemed to be an undercurrent of concern for traditional literacy and the four cases who have had some teaching experience discussed a perceived decline in reading skills and interest among children. This coincides with recent research<sup>37</sup> as well as Finland's recent PISA scores<sup>38</sup> which show a decline in reading skills, especially among boys. It is possible that this knowledge had some influence on the opinions of the participants. These opinions are interpreted in this study as a form of resistance towards electronic and digital media. In some ways, this resistance is similar to what has been encountered by other Nordic ME researchers studying teacher training, such as Instefjord (2015) and Tømte (2015). Despite their reservations and perceived resistance towards electronic and digital media, the participants were all of the opinion that if ME is taught, the most important topics would be ICT and MIL, followed by cyber security, digital citizenship, and game-based learning.

Opinions were almost unanimous about the need for compulsory ME in TE. All but one participant agreed strongly that ME in TE should be made compulsory and have a bigger presence in the curriculum. The only one who did not strongly agree with compulsory ME in TE was case 4 who had some reservations about how the addition of compulsory courses would increase the programme workload. Cases 3 and 4 brought up some valid points about the over-saturation and scope of the curriculum. As they perceived the curriculum to already be heavily loaded, they were concerned that their workloads would be further increased by the addition of ME courses, especially compulsory ones. This is an understandable dilemma and a common challenge for curriculum design in general. Verniers (2015), for example, discusses this issue and the difficulties associated with standalone ME subjects in a school context. Finding that delicate balance between the right type and number of courses is often akin to a tightrope act; risking the lack of mastery on one hand and burnout on the other. Figuring out which courses and subjects should be a compulsory part of TE is a challenging task for the experts. Further research, and perhaps some curriculum trials, in this area are worth pursuing, especially considering how important a comprehensive and balanced TE curriculum is.

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<sup>37</sup> The site 'lukukeskus.fi' has some detailed statistics and a comprehensive list of research done in Finland (mostly in Finnish) concerning reading literacy and its recent decline: <http://lukukeskus.fi/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/10-faktaa-pdf-f-edit.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> [https://www.oecd.org/pisa/Combined\\_Executive\\_Summaries\\_PISA\\_2018.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/pisa/Combined_Executive_Summaries_PISA_2018.pdf)

## 5 DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the key findings of the study in relation to the research question and the conceptual framework as encapsulated in the wheel model (Figure 1). It will discuss the answer to the research question as well as the implications of those answers.

### 5.1 Key Findings of the Study

In essence, the findings of this study show that media education in teacher education is limited, hidden, undervalued, underprioritized, and somewhat misunderstood. It is not always perceived as teaching and learning *about* and *with* the media as proposed by the Nordic model of media education (Christensen & Tufte, 2010; Erstad, 1997; Lundgren, 2014; Schofield, 2015), and as conceptualized and illustrated by the wheel model (Figure 1) in this thesis. Often, there is only a partial understanding of media education among teacher students who appear to understand it as either teaching and learning with the media or about the media, but rarely as a comprehensive entity which encompasses both teaching and learning about and with the media. Fortunately, this partial understanding appears to consistently include a critical perspective; which is encouraging since this study is rooted in the conceptual stance that all media education should be approached from a critical perspective. There are a number of key findings in this study which shed light on how media education is present in the curriculum of teacher education. These findings are drawn from the perspectives of pre-service teacher education students and are based on their own experiences and opinions. They are as follows:

1. Media education (ME) in the curriculum of teacher education (TE) is limited, with only a few stand-alone courses available. There were only 3 courses that could be identified as ME courses in the entire 2017-2019 curriculum guideline: 'Introduction to Computing' (1-3 credits), 'Media and Visual Cultures' (5 credits), and 'Media Education, Participation and Active Citizenship' (5 credits). In other words, a maximum of 13 credits out of the total of 300 credits needed for graduation. Out of these, only 'Introduction to Computing' and 'Media and Visual Cultures' are compulsory. 'Media Education, Participation and Active Citizenship' is an optional course. The few ME courses found in the curriculum lack breadth and depth, from the perspective of the

participants, and are not considered relevant nor comprehensive. Furthermore, these ME courses also appear to lack essential didactic elements.

2. ME in the TE curriculum is often ‘hidden’, invisible, and often misunderstood. Most of the ME components of the curriculum are embedded within other courses which cover a range of competence areas. Students do not always realize when a particular course or topic is actually ME. Additionally, pre-service teachers often have only a partial understanding of ME as a concept.
3. ME is undervalued and unprioritized. It is not promoted as a free choice study despite the fact that the university has a good range of ME courses available through its ME programme. ME is perceived as unexciting and some of the topics taught are considered old and outdated. It is not considered interesting nor appealing as a topic of study.
4. The ME competencies of pre-service teachers are greatly influenced by their own personal skills and abilities prior to, and apart from, the TE programme and less by the education they have received within the programme itself. This could potentially lead to inequality in the preparedness of teachers, thereby resulting in a form of inequality in ME pedagogy in the classroom. Not having had enough ME, or the appropriate form of ME, created some personal and practical challenges for pre-service teachers in the classroom during their training practice.
5. ME, especially in the form of ICT Competence and Critical Media and Information Literacy, is considered vital and necessary in TE, schools and classrooms, and society in general. It is considered a key area of competence and literacy in the media landscape of today and the future.

A number of key findings in this study concur with past research into media education and the teacher education curriculum in Finland. The limited and ‘hidden’ presence of media education in the curriculum revealed by this study supports the findings of Korhonen & Rantala (2007, as cited in Ruokamo et. al. 2016). According to Ruokamo et. al. (2016, p.5), Korhonen & Rantala “reflected on the fragmented place of media education in teacher education” and “defined the media education evident in the curricula of teacher education units as threaded and limited”. They further elaborate that media education in the teacher education curriculum needed to be found and is only “one content area among many reflected” (Korhonen & Rantala 2007, as cited in Ruokamo et. al. 2016).

The inequality of preparedness mentioned in point number 4 is in line with the claim of Kotilainen & Kupiainen (2012, as cited in Kupiainen, 2019) that there are inequalities in the preparedness of pre-service teachers when it comes to media literacy education at universities in Finland. Media education is a crucial component in ensuring equality in education when it comes to the preparedness of teachers to navigate the media landscape themselves, while also teaching others do the same. Without comprehensive media education in the teacher education curriculum as an equalizer, there is a risk of inequality when it comes to teaching about and with the media in future

classrooms. Children deserve to be taught by teachers who are competent in the very media education skills they are expected to master; in the same way they deserve to be taught language and mathematics by teachers who are competent in language and mathematics. The same rules which apply to traditional literacy should also apply to media and information literacy and multiliteracy, and ideally, media education should exist alongside with and enhance traditional literacy.

Coming full circle, back to the source from which the idea for this study was first conceived, the results of this study echo the findings of Salomaa et. al. (2017) who claimed that pre-service teachers, from their own perspectives, felt that there was too little media education in their teacher education programmes. However, unlike Salomaa et. al. (2017), this study found that there is no clear emphasis on ICT courses in the curriculum of this particular university. On the contrary, this study reveals that ICT courses and other media education courses are rather equally represented in the curriculum; and unfortunately, all these media education courses are equally underrepresented.

## 5.2 Implications of the Key Findings

Based on the findings of this study, one could argue that some changes are needed in order to bring the curriculum of teacher education up to par with the demands of the Finnish National Core Curriculum and the classrooms of this digital age. There appears to not be enough media education courses in the teacher education curriculum as it stands and there is a clear lack of compulsory media education courses. Only a total of about 8 credits or less out of the total 300 credits needed to graduate with a bachelor's degree in teacher education come from compulsory media education courses. That is a mere 2.67% of the sum of total credits required in the programme; which should be cause for concern to all who understand the importance of media education.

Nonetheless, as some of the participants themselves astutely pointed out, it is not just a matter of adding or subtracting courses. Instead, a restructuring of the entire programme to reflect the needs of future teachers and their future students is not only needed but long overdue. While media education is only one part of the education of teachers, it is a vital part which is necessary in ensuring that future teachers are prepared for the task of teaching in a highly digitized environment which requires ICT and MIL skills. Although media education is not the *only* defining component of teacher education, at the very least, it should be recognized and prioritized as *one* defining component. There are many pillars that uphold and support the programme of teacher education and media education needs to be one of them. Media education should be part of a comprehensive and well-rounded curriculum, and should exist in a symbiotic relationship with other pedagogical competence areas.

## 6 CONCLUSION

This thesis began by introducing the research space and defining the niche this study seeks to occupy. The need for media education in the curriculum of teacher education was established; with literature supported evidence that demonstrated the demand for media education pertaining to the modern digital environment, the Finnish National Core Curriculum, and the realities of today's classrooms. The theoretical framework of the study, as it pertains to media education in the Finnish National Core Curriculum, was presented in detail and it was established that the study is positioned within the Nordic model of media education. A conceptual model of media education called the wheel model (Figure 1) was presented as a visual representation of the media education theory within which the study is framed. This model conceptualizes media education based on the Nordic model of media education (Christensen & Tufte, 2010; Erstad, 1997; Lundgren, 2014; Schofield, 2015) which defines media education as teaching and learning *about* and *with* the media. At the beginning of this thesis, it was revealed that the objective of the study is to shed light on the presence of media education in the curriculum of teacher education in Finland based on the perspectives of pre-service teacher students. The research question was posed:

*How is media education present in the curriculum of teacher education in Finland from the perspective of pre-service teacher students?*

The answer to that question was sought through a qualitative case study involving in-depth interviews with pre-service teacher students. The methodological aspects of this collective case study, from the research design to ethical considerations, were explained. It was established that this study is approached from the interpretivist research paradigm. The findings were then presented and analyzed in relation to the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study. This was followed by a critical discussion of those findings as well as their implications. While these findings are argued to be generalizable to other students within the same teacher education programme at this university, there is a probability that they may also be applicable to teacher students in teacher education programmes at other universities in Finland. Further research is required in order to determine this.

The findings of this study reveal that media education in Finnish teacher education at this particular university is limited, hidden, invisible, undervalued, underprioritized, misunderstood, and much needed. This is in line with the findings of Korhonen & Rantala (2007), Mertala & Pääjärvi



(2015), Ruokamo et. al. 2016, and Salomaa et. al. (2017). The findings also indicate that media education in the teacher education curriculum needs developing in order to prevent inequality of preparedness among pre-service teacher students in Finland, as alluded to by Kotilainen & Kupiainen (2012, as cited in Kupiainen, 2019). Ultimately, this is easier said than done. As Fry & Seely (2011, p.217) note, “ensuring that preservice teachers develop sophisticated 21st-century information and media literacy skills” is an endeavor fraught with complexity. In an effort to add something of value to the discussion instead of merely pointing out the flaws and challenges in the system, this thesis will attempt some constructive recommendations for change pertaining to media education in the Finnish teacher education curriculum.

In the introduction to this thesis, it was revealed that this study seeks to illuminate the presence of media education in the curriculum of Finnish teacher education. In doing so, it is hoped that this study will affect some positive change with regards to media education in the programme of teacher education. The aspiration is that this humble little study will somehow begin a ripple effect resulting in a positive impact on the future presence of media education in teacher education; and that this will ultimately make a positive difference in the lives of teachers and students in Finland. With this in mind, the recommendations of this study, based on the findings, are as follows:

1. There needs to be more compulsory media education (ME) in teacher education (TE). 8 credits of compulsory ME is a paltry figure and should be improved. At the very least, a minimum of 15 credits should come from ME courses. This amounts to about 5% of the total 300 credits required.
2. ME courses should be given some priority and be formally recommended as optional study courses. More ME courses should be listed in the optional courses section of the curricular guide.
3. More stand-alone ME courses need to be introduced in TE. These should cover a range of competence-based topics: from ME theory (‘what’) courses, to ME skills (‘how to’) courses, and critical ME (‘why and who’) courses. These courses should be comprehensive and in-depth. Specific, stand-alone ME courses are vital because it is only through these that the breadth and depth of ME can be covered and taught effectively. These type of courses are vital for the teaching and learning about and with the media, as conceptualized in this thesis. While integrating ME into other topics and courses is great, the constraints of time and topic scope mean that there will not be enough time to teach ME in depth while simultaneously teaching another subject in depth.
4. Relating to the previous recommendation, ME courses that are didactic in nature need to be introduced and expanded in the curriculum. These type of courses are greatly needed. As Kellner & Share (2007, pp. 67-68) explicate, we need teacher education that teaches “critical pedagogy, and practical applications for how to engage students in the classroom with critical media literacy concepts”.

5. When it comes to ICT courses, what matters in the long term is not just a mastery of the tools themselves, but rather an “appropriation of a digital competence that embraces awareness of how technology can be used critically and reflectively in the process of building new knowledge” (Instefjord, 2015, p.170). It is important to realize that pre-service teachers who begin their study programme in 2019, will likely not graduate before 2024. Similar to what Instefjord (2015, p.170) describes in her article, there is a chance that by the time they fully qualify as teachers “the technical aspects of their digital competence in terms of mastery of digital tools may already be outdated”. This is important because the rapid rate of technological and ICT development will continue to be a challenge for ME in TE (see also Tirri, 2014)
6. Just as ME components are integrated in the FNCC14 as transversal competencies, they should also be integrated in the TE curriculum as transversal competencies. As Kellner & Share (2007, p.68) argue, ME components such as critical media literacy should be “a common thread that runs through all curricular areas since it deals with communication and society.”

While this study revealed some important things about media education in the curriculum of teacher education, it has barely scratched the surface of this topic. There are ways in which the study could have been broader and deeper. It could have included a larger number of participants, as well as a wider range of participants. A wider variety of methodological tools, such as in situ observations at schools and the university campus, focus groups, and detailed reviews of the courses offered in the programme could have been employed to provide a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding. Herein, within the limitations of this study, lies the possibilities and direction for future research. Further and more extensive research is needed in order to illuminate and investigate the presence of media education in the curriculum of pre-service teacher education in Finland.

Future research should explore this topic more broadly and deeply, and include a larger number and variety (gender, backgrounds, and year of study) of participants. The range of participants could also be expanded to include in-service teachers, media education and teacher education professors, and other relevant faculty members. The scope of the study could also be widened to include other universities and teacher education programmes across Finland. Research into the structure, content, and efficacy of available media education courses as well as the embedded media education components of other courses is also needed. Besides these, research into what type of media education courses are relevant in terms of which emergent skills are needed by teachers and society in general (especially relating to future employment and active citizenship) is also needed. All of this is essential in order to ensure that the curriculum of teacher education in Finland is one that is comprehensive, effective, robust, didactic, reflexive, and of a high standard: in short, worthy of one of the best education systems in the world.

# 7 EVALUATION OF THE STUDY

This chapter details the systematic evaluation of every aspect of this study, from the theoretical framework and research paradigm to how this study compares to other studies, according to the strategies and checks for validation as proposed by Maxwell (2005) and Lewis & Ritchie (2003) as guidelines for the evaluation.

## *7.1 Theoretical Framework*

This study was framed within a solid theoretical framework situated within media education theory. A sincere effort was made to build a strong theoretical framework for the study. Every aspect of the framework was explained in detail, and transparency was practiced in the writing process. The struggle over the appropriate theoretical approach as well as the need for re-thinking and re-examining the theory was honestly reported. A sincere attempt was made to find the best possible framework to position the study in and, in the end, a conceptual framework was proposed which took into account all the aspects of media education theory perceived to be relevant to this study.

If there is one criticism of this component of the study, it is that it might be perhaps a little too detailed and broad for the nature of the study. Nonetheless, it was a conscious decision to perspicuously and meticulously frame the study in the theoretical phase. This was in order to solidly anchor the study in the theory and have a strong base from which to build the study. However, there can be a downside to having a clear theoretical position. Seale (2004, p.417) explains that while a theoretical position can help a researcher perceive things, “it can equally screen out other ways of seeing”. I cannot say with absolute certainty that my theoretical position has not caused some blind spots, or that it does not create some sort of filter bubble with regards to the data and the phenomenon being studied. For that, I will need someone else to examine this study, and the data, without the influence and possible bias of a theoretical position. Nonetheless, I trust that having conducted the study with an open mind and a sincere desire to discover things for myself, I have done my best to not completely screen out other perspectives. In any case, due to the fact that this is a study conducted from the interpretivist approach, my influence as the researcher (including my points of view and theoretical positions) is not only an accepted but expected aspect of the research.

## 7.2 *Research Design*

A good qualitative study is one in which the purpose is clearly defined and where there is a “coherence between the research questions and the methods or approaches proposed” Lewis (2003, p.47). The research design, paradigm, and purpose were made clear from the onset, to help the reader immediately understand the nature of the study and the principles and assumptions under which it operates. The choice of the interpretivist paradigm made it clear that this would be a research exploring the question of ‘how?’ and that it should be evaluated as such. It is vital to understand the paradigm that informs a research because the paradigm determines “the standards by which the research will be evaluated” (Morrow, 2007, p.214). According to Morrow (2007), an interpretivist study, such as this one for example, will not be negatively evaluated for lacking external auditors because that is part of the nature of the studies within this paradigm. Morrow argues that “interpretivist-constructivist and ideological paradigms demonstrate more subjectivity, interaction with participants, and the voice of the researcher” (2007, p.214). This explains why these features are found in this study. Interestingly, Morrow also explains that the first-person narrative is preferred in research writing; and this is what I have tried to do throughout this thesis, in order to create a more personal and engaging narrative. This allowed me to be clear and open concerning my role as a researcher within the study and also enabled me to take personal responsibility for the study and its reporting. According to Lewis (2003, p.47), good design requires flexibility because it is a continuous process which requires a regular and sustained review of the decisions and the approaches. Flexibility and a non-linear design process are definitely a feature of this study, as explained in chapter 3. By this measure, this study qualifies as a good qualitative study (as described by Lewis, 2003).

## 7.3 *Research Methods*

Credibility in the documenting of research methods requires a clear account of not just how the research was conducted but why the particular approaches and methods were chosen to answer the research question and meet the research aim (White et. al., 2003, p. 289). This form of credibility was certainly achieved in the methodology portion of this thesis. The description of how the study was conducted is organized, detailed, and precise. In an effort at clarity and transparency, explanations were given as to why these approaches and methods were chosen. Arguments were made, with supporting literature, for the choice of the qualitative case study method which employed in-depth interviews. It is believed that the methods used in this study were appropriate and sufficiently effective towards answering the research question. However, the criticism could be made that perhaps

the study could have included more participants, or a wider range of participants to enhance its robustness. It might have also been beneficial to include other forms of data, such as classroom observations and focus groups. Nevertheless, alternative forms of data were not pursued due to time and logistical constraints.

## Sampling

One of the validity checks recommended by Lewis & Ritchie (2003, p.274) has to do with sampling and is called 'sample coverage'. They explain that a valid and robust sample is one which is selected without any known bias and is inclusive of the constituencies considered to be important. I would argue that this is true of the sample selection in this study, as detailed in section 3.2 of this thesis. There were no known biases in the selection of the participants in this study. I did not know beforehand what they thought about their study programme in regard to media education. Whether they would confirm my presumptions or disprove them was an unknown factor. The participants were chosen purely for availability reasons and without any hidden agenda or ulterior motives.

An effort at providing diversity was also made in this study. There were both male and female participants who were from a range of study years; from 1<sup>st</sup> year to 6<sup>th</sup> year students. It could be argued that this is a commendable sample in terms of range and diversity for a small study like this one. This demonstrates the validity of representation in this study, as described by Lewis & Ritchie (2003, p.273).

A possible validity threat with regards to the sampling is the fact that I personally know three out of the five participants outside of this study. These are individuals whom I was friends with before I had even decided on the topic for my thesis. However, I did not inform them about the details of the study prior to the interviews. They were only told that I would be asking questions about their study programme in relation to media education. The specific nature of the study and its aims were only discussed after the interviews were over. This was an effort to prevent any subconscious skewing of the narrative in order to 'please' me, or to indulge any 'agenda' I might be perceived to have.

Maxwell (2005, p.243) stresses that it is important for interviewers to understand how they influence what the interviewee says, and how to ethically use that influence towards answering their research questions. In anticipating any possible influence on the participants which may be biased in my favor, I attempted to preemptively deflect such bias by not revealing the nature and purpose of the study. Refraining from giving the participants details and not providing them with the interview questions beforehand also ensured that their responses would be spontaneous, candid, and instinctive. This enhances the trustworthiness of the data and enables a truthful capture of the phenomenon (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003, p.274) being investigated.

## Generalizability/Transferability

One of the desired outcomes of purposive sampling in this study is the generalizability (or transferability) of the collective cases in question. According to Maxwell (2005, p.235), one of the important functions of purposive sampling is that it can be used “to achieve representativeness or typicality of the settings, individuals, or activities selected”. In my opinion, when it comes to their experiences of media education within their programme, the participants in this study are representative of the larger group of class teacher education students in their faculty. This argument is based on the fact that all the students in the programme are subject to the same curriculum. Every class teacher education student in the teacher education programme is, by default, required to follow the same teaching schedule<sup>39</sup> and curriculum<sup>40</sup> (including the same set of compulsory courses). Thus, the teacher education programme (and its curriculum and structure) is the unifying and generalizing factor that binds the different cases together within the bounded system which is the programme itself. The only variable within that structure is the factor of free choice study options. However, this is a variable factor which only concerns a small portion of their entire programme content. Nonetheless, it *is* a variable and an unknown factor and, therefore, must be acknowledged as a validity threat when it comes to claims of generalizability of participants in this study.

While some may frown on generalizability in case studies, Flyvbjerg (2004, p.423) states that “it is incorrect to conclude that one cannot generalize from a single case” and that generalizing is dependent on the specific case and how it is selected. I contend that the relative uniformity and standardized structure of the programme for class teacher education at this university provide a contained environment, with relatively distinct boundaries, within which heterogeneity of programme experiences can be assumed. There is a high probability that the findings of this study are transferable to a larger group of class teacher education students in general. Therefore, based on the reasons stated above, I would argue that the sample selected is one which is generalizable and that generalizing in this study is both valid and justified.

The sampling choice, generalizability claims, and limitations relating to the participants have been clearly explained and justified in this study. Links to archived online faculty pages and curriculum guides have been provided so that the claims concerning the programme structure and curriculum can be easily verified. While one could choose to disagree with or refute the claims made in this study, the transparency with which those claims are presented cannot be refuted.

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<sup>39</sup> Archived University of Tampere Complete Teaching Schedule:  
[https://www10.uta.fi/opas/teaching/teaching.htm?lvv=2018&ops=161&ots=46&kieli=en&display\\_long=true](https://www10.uta.fi/opas/teaching/teaching.htm?lvv=2018&ops=161&ots=46&kieli=en&display_long=true)

<sup>40</sup> Archived University of Tampere Student Guide to the Curriculum for Educational Studies:  
<https://www10.uta.fi/opas/tutkintoOhjelma.htm?rid=14510&uiLang=en&lang=en&lvv=2018>

## Capture of the Phenomenon

The ‘capture of the phenomenon’ is a validity check which examines whether the environment and quality of questions were effective enough to allow participants to express or explore their views fully (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003, p.274). I would claim that the interview environment and quality of questions were sufficiently effective in this study. The interview venues were safe, neutral, comfortable, and very familiar to all the participants. The participants were met on ‘their turf’ so to speak; in public spaces on their campus, which were mutually agreed upon and well known to them.

The questions were carefully drawn up and discussed with one of the supervising professors for this thesis, and modified according to his feedback. They were also modified and adjusted to include elements that were brought up in the first interview. In doing so, every effort was made to allow participant expression and exploration of the phenomenon. The semi structured questions also allowed for flexibility in this process. However, it cannot be denied that the choice of questions which I had drafted influenced the dialogue, and therefore the data. As Maxwell (2005, p.243) explains, “the interviewer has a powerful and inescapable influence on the data collected”. With this in mind, the lean of the data towards answering the research question as a result of the design of the interview questions must be acknowledged.

If there is one criticism of the interview questions themselves, it would be that there was not enough follow through at some junctures. As I analyzed the data, I found myself wishing that I had probed certain responses or taken a line of questioning further. It is unfortunate that these things were not realized during the interview phase but were only discovered after the process was over. In some instances, I think that I was perhaps in a hurry to get on with the questions (due to time constraints and inexperience) and this undermined the ‘exploration’ aspect of the capture of the phenomenon. If I had more time, I would have considered conducting some follow-up interviews.

## *7.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation*

### Methodical Orderliness and Transparency

The process of analysis in this study was carried out in an organized and orderly manner. It was explained in systematic detail and every effort was made to ensure transparency. The procedures involved in inductive content analysis were followed accordingly and explained clearly in the chapter on methods. Every single page of the interview transcripts was analyzed and coded in order to prevent excluding and discriminating against any data.

## Validity of Interpretation

Validity of interpretation refers to the presence of sufficient internal evidence to support the explanatory accounts that have been developed in the study (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003, p.274). One of the challenges in evaluating the validity of the data analysis and interpretation is that analyzing interviews and interpreting meaning is a somewhat subjective endeavor. According to Kvale (2007, p.103) “No standard method exists, no *via regia*, to arrive at essential meanings and deeper implications of what is said in an interview.” Nevertheless, this validity threat was minimized by analyzing and interpreting the transcripts ‘as is’ without unnecessary interpretation whenever possible. Whenever presumptions or suppositions were made, they were disclosed fully and explicitly. In any case, the fact that this is an interpretivist study allows for some level of interpretation and an interpretive analysis of the data, within reason, is to be expected.

Great care was taken during the interview process to not misinterpret nor come to hasty conclusions about the participants’ responses. Interpretations and assumptions were clarified by explicitly voicing them to the participants and asking for clarification and confirmation. They were often asked what they meant, and whether my understanding of their statements was accurate. Due to this process of verifying and confirming *during* the interviews, there was a level of confidence in the interpretation and writing up of the findings *after* the interviews. I was able to ascertain that what was reported through the findings was indeed what was meant by the participants because I had taken the time to clarify matters during the interviews themselves.

To further enhance the validity of interpretation, verbatim excerpts were presented whenever necessary and categories abstracted from those excerpts were clearly listed. This allows the reader to see how the interviews were analyzed and interpreted. This level of transparency about the analysis and interpretation is important because it enables readers to follow the thought process (which in this study includes the interpretive process) leading up to the conclusions (White et. al. 2003, p.289).

## Handling Bias

Bias refers to the “ways in which data collection or analysis are distorted by the researcher’s theory, values, or preconceptions” (Maxwell, 2005, p.243). In the spirit of full disclosure, I must indeed admit that I had my own presuppositions on the phenomenon being studied. Nonetheless, I believe that I did not let them cloud the findings of this study. As Schofield (2015) explains, having presuppositions is an unavoidable and understandable consequence of one’s background and theoretical assumptions. However, what matters for validity is preventing one’s presuppositions from directing and controlling the interpretation of data; and doing this requires the researcher’s awareness of their presuppositions and background (Schofield, 2015, p.49). Although I was aware of past research revealing that media



education in the curriculum of teacher education is limited, I wanted to delve into this study without being biased by this knowledge. This was vital because I wanted to investigate the phenomenon with a fresh perspective and gather unbiased data which I hoped would reveal the phenomenon further. This was the only way I could perceive of bringing something new to the discussion and adding value to the field of research.

In the interest of transparency, I must acknowledge that, as a student of media education, there is a temptation and tendency to magnify my field of study and see it as the most important and defining feature in the landscape. Objectively however, I realize that this is not necessarily the case when it comes to the bigger picture of the phenomenon being studied. Looking from the perspective of media education alone does not provide a complete picture. There are many factors surrounding and influencing the programme of teacher education and its curriculum. Many different elements need to come together in a harmonious and symbiotic relationship in order for teacher education to be comprehensive, effective, and dynamic; and media education is only one of them.

### Discrepant/Deviant Case Analysis

According to Maxwell (2005, p.244), the identifying and analyzing of “discrepant data and negative cases is a key part of the logic of validity testing in qualitative research.” This indicator of validity was also present in this study. It would have suited my presuppositions and ultimate objective if all the participants had reported low ICT and MIL competence as well as major challenges resulting from insufficient media education in the programme; thus, demonstrating a great need for media education. However, the data clearly indicated that this was not the case. Case 2 and 4 were ‘deviant cases’ who reported that they did not necessarily need any media education courses. Case 4 was especially confident in his ICT and MIL competence. He was also cautious in his assessment of the need for compulsory media education courses. Initially, I was slightly thrown off by this since I thought that this contrary point of view indicated a problem in my research. In fact, I remember thinking during the interview that he was ‘ruining my data’. Despite my misgivings, I chose to listen, document, and present the interview with an open mind. Although there is a natural temptation to ignore data that does not fit into one’s conclusions (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003, p.275; Maxwell, 2005, p.244), the discrepant case was analyzed and treated equally as one of the five cases; each with a story to tell and experiences to be shared. As a first-time researcher who was still in the data collection phase and had not yet become familiarized with data analysis related literature, I did not realize that these deviant cases were a form of internal validation (Lewis & Ritchie, p.275) and a welcome occurrence in qualitative research. Thus, I would argue that the discrepant data, as well as the honest and transparent reporting of it, enhances the robustness of this study.

## 7.5 *Presentation of the Findings*

### Integrity of Presentation

Integrity in the presentation of the findings “requires a demonstration that the explanations and conclusions presented are generated from, and grounded in, the data” (White et. al., 2003, p.289). This is exactly what was done in this study. The data was presented in a systematic way which “effectively guides the reader through the key findings” (White et. al., 2003, p.289). The explanations and conclusions of the findings were sourced entirely from the interview data and are grounded within that data. Verbatim interview excerpts were used whenever possible to support the report of the findings and provide insight into how the data was interpreted. These were presented with minimal editing (only the removal of multiple repeated words) and omitted or inserted words were indicated in order to present the data ‘as is’ and ensure authenticity. Rich data (which is a strategy for ensuring validity) requires verbatim interview transcripts instead of just notes on what the researcher thinks is significant (Maxwell, 2005). There was also an effort made to “strike a balance between descriptive, explanatory and interpretative evidence” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 244) in the presentation of the findings. Simple charts and tables were created using information drawn directly from the data. These required little to no interpretive effort and depicted information that can be easily identified from the raw data. Together, the verbatim excerpts, charts, and tables constitute a descriptive, explanatory, and interpretive report of the findings.

### Quasi-statistics

The aforementioned use of charts to present the findings is a form of ‘quasi-statistics’ (Maxwell, 2005). Maxwell regards this as a validity component and lists it among the strategies for increasing credibility in qualitative studies. He explains that many conclusions of qualitative studies actually have a quantitative component which is implicit. He goes on to elaborate that whenever a claim is made about a particular phenomenon being “typical, rare, or prevalent in the setting or population studied”, that claim is inherently quantitative in nature and thus requires some quantitative reinforcement (Maxwell, 2005, p.245). As Maxwell elucidates, the quasi-statistics used in this thesis support inherently quantitative claims by presenting them in a clear, concise, and visual manner.

### Identification and Labeling

Identification and labeling is a validity check involving the identification, categorization, and labeling of the phenomena in a way that reflects the meanings that participants assigned to it (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003, p. 274). This was done in this study by staying close to the interview data and its meaning. The

underlying semantic meanings of the participants' responses were the sole basis for the formation of the categories during analysis. Providing examples of the original data from which these labels and categories were created allows readers to evaluate for themselves whether the labeling is accurate and justified. This in turn lends robustness to the study.

### Validity of Display

This study also demonstrates validity of display (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). This means that the findings were “portrayed in a way that remains 'true' to the original data and allows others to see the analytic constructions that have occurred” (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003, p.274). In this thesis, the reader is often able to see the interview excerpts and compare how they were summarized and abstracted into various categories. The original data was presented verbatim whenever necessary and illustrated in clear and simple diagrams which require minimal interpretation. The process and reasoning behind the interpretations that do occur were explained and discussed. The abstraction process was explained and demonstrated, and the generic and main categories derived from the data were listed clearly. These categories were color coded to facilitate comprehension, identification, and cross referencing.

## 7.6 *Ethical Considerations*

Ethical considerations are an important factor when evaluating a study. Ethical issues such as obtaining consent, ensuring confidentiality, and safeguarding the anonymity of individuals are all vital parts of the ethical integrity of a study (Creswell, 2007). Utmost effort was made in this study to practice ethical research methods by doing all three things mentioned above. Written and signed consent was obtained from all participants prior to each interview. The consent forms laid out the details of how and when their information, as well as the interview data, would be used. Participant confidentiality was ensured to the best possible extent. They were aware that their responses would not be confidential as these would constitute the data in this study and would be analyzed and reported openly. However, their personal information was kept confidential and the files and documents related to the study were stored securely on password protected devices and platforms. Participants were guaranteed anonymity and only their gender and year of study were revealed. Their names and other personal information were not included in the data. In the transcription and analysis, they were merely referred to by a case number in chronological order of when the interviews took place. Anonymity was considered paramount in this study because the participants were asked to give very personal and honest feedback about their study programmes. I did not want them to face any risk that this study would affect them adversely and put them at odds with the university, faculty, or other

fellow students. Anonymity was crucial in preventing embarrassment, backlash, or any other possible negative repercussions for these students; many of whom still had years ahead to complete the teacher education programme. All the efforts described above demonstrate the ethical integrity of this study.

### ***7.7 Comparison to other Research***

Comparison to other studies or existing literature is also a strategy for validity (Maxwell, 2005, p.245) and the final yardstick for evaluation in this study. While the literature in English on media education in the curriculum of teacher education in Finland is limited, there are a handful of studies that do explore this topic. The findings of this study align with the few other studies I was able to locate; namely Korhonen & Rantala (2007), Mertala & Pääjärvi (2015), Ruokamo et. al. (2016), and Salomaa et. al. (2017). This study concurs with these previous studies and illuminates them further in the specific context of the teacher education programme within this particular university.

### ***7.8 Concluding Thoughts and Reflection***

In the interest of truth, I must admit that the entire process of creating this thesis was riddled with self-doubt. I questioned myself, my theories, my concepts, my methods, my analysis, my presentation of the data, and even my writing. In short, I questioned everything at every step of the way. There were moments when I felt completely sure of what I was doing, and there were moments of deep uncertainty and perplexity. I went over everything, mulled over everything, wondered, questioned, and agonized over everything. I am certain that this is a common predicament among students and researchers. This experience, however unpleasant, is not a negative one when seen from the perspective of its effect on the validity of a study. On the contrary, I believe that this punctilious, intense, and somewhat pedantic approach to research enhances the rigor and validity of a study. I sincerely hope that this proves to be true in this study. Through this study, I have gained a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of media education and the theories surrounding it. I have learned that media education and the theories and practices related to it should always include the teaching and learning *about* the media as well as *with* the media. This was not irrevocably clear to me before this study. I realize now how limited my own understanding of media education was and I appreciate how much I have learned through this process. I hope that this thesis will pass on the things I have learned to other students of media education; and in doing so perhaps shed light on their own scholarly pursuit of understanding and researching the complex and multifaceted entity that is media education.

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# APPENDICES

## *Appendix A* Consent Form

### **University of Tampere** **Consent Form for Participation in a Master's Thesis Research** **Media Education in Pre-Service Teacher Education: A Case Study**

#### **Introduction**

You are being asked to participate in a research study for a Master's Thesis by MA student Vallery Michael from the Media Education programme at the University of Tampere. When completed, the thesis will be available to the public at the university library. This study seeks to investigate the curriculum of pre-service teacher education at the University of Tampere from the perspective of media education and teacher preparedness. You were selected as a participant because you are a student in the Teacher Education programme at the University of Tampere. Please read through this consent form, and ask any questions that you may have, before agreeing to be in the study.

#### **Purpose of Study**

To investigate pre-service teacher students' experience with media education in their study curriculum.

To examine what pre-service teacher students think about their curriculum content pertaining to media education and whether they feel it has sufficiently prepared them for their future careers.

To propose changes, if necessary, to the curriculum of teacher education in Finland.

#### **Description of the Study Procedures**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview where you will be asked questions concerning your experiences with the curriculum content of the Teacher Education programme.

Your name and private details will be kept anonymous and confidential. Only your **gender**, **programme type** (class teacher or subject teacher), and **year of study** will be revealed.

The interview will be recorded, and the recording will be transcribed and coded. Extracts from the transcription will be used in this Master's Thesis.

If you wish, a copy of the transcription will be sent to you for prior approval.

#### **Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study**

There are no reasonably foreseeable or expected risks. There may be unknown risks.

#### **Confidentiality**

The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Research records will be kept in a secure file, and all electronic information will be stored in a password protected file. Your personal information and identity will be kept private. The recording made of this interview will be used only for analysis. The extracts from the interview, from which you will not be personally identified, may be used in a presentation, report or article developed as a result

of the research. No other use will be made of the recording without your written permission, and no one outside the research team will be allowed access to the original recording. Your anonymized data may be kept for future research purposes such as publications related to this study after the completion of the study.

### **Right to Refuse or Withdraw**

The decision to participate in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw completely from the study at any time without any negative consequences. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to stop the interview process if you feel the need to. You also have the right to request that the interviewer not use any of your interview material.

Please note that if you want to withdraw from the study after your interview has been completed, the deadline to notify the researcher is **May 31, 2019**.

### **Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns**

You have the right to ask questions about this study and to have those questions answered by the researcher before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, please feel free to contact me. A summary of the results of the study will be sent to you at your request.

If you have any problems or concerns that occur as a result of your participation, you can report them to the researcher responsible for this study.

### **Contact**

If you have any questions or further concerns, please contact Vallery Michael at [vallery.michael@tuni.fi](mailto:vallery.michael@tuni.fi)

### **Consent**

Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## *Appendix B*

### Interview Questions

#### **MEDIA EDUCATION IN TEACHER EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHER STUDENTS**

##### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR MASTER'S THESIS RESEARCH**

1. Which year of study are you currently in?
2. Are you a studying to be a class teacher or a subject teacher? Which subject? Are specializing in visual arts education?
3. What does media education mean to you? What do you understand by the term media education?
4. Have you have taken any media education or media literacy related courses thus far? If yes, which courses? If no, then why not?
5. What is the total number of minimum credits you are required to have in order to graduate?
6. How many credits from courses in media education, media literacy or ICT do you think you will have accumulated by the time you graduate?
7. Are media education/literacy courses offered or recommended as a free choice study in your programme?
8. What do you think is in the content of the Finnish National Core Curriculum (2016) that is related to Media Education?
9. Are you aware that the Finnish National Core Curriculum requires some level of media literacy and ICT skills to be taught and integrated in the classroom? What do you think of that?
10. Do you feel that there is enough media education in your programme to prepare you for the task of teaching children who are highly competent when it comes to digital media and ICT?
11. Do you think that you would need more training and support in the area of media education, including digital literacy and ICT? What kind of training?
12. What would you consider the most important topics in Media Education & ICT in any of the courses you have taken on the subject? If you have not taken any courses, then what are the most important topics you would like to learn about?
13. Are there any new challenges facing Finnish society today which would make studying media education and literacy even more important for students today?
14. Would you like to see more courses in media education and literacy offered in your faculty/programme in the future? Why?
15. Do you think there should be more compulsory media education courses in the teacher education programme?