



# Towards a Conceptual Model of Media Education: A Finnish Perspective

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## Abstract

Over the past couple of decades, media education has evolved from a relatively novel area of study to become an established and thriving field which has captured the attention of scholars, educators, stakeholders, and policy makers worldwide. Media education elements such as media literacy, digital literacy, and digital citizenship have become somewhat familiar terms and have grown into burgeoning fields of study in their own right. Over the years, there has been a wealth of literature and theories centred around media education, fuelled by the exponential growth of online and digital media, constantly advancing digital technology, and an ever-evolving media landscape. Despite this, there seems to be a void in the literature when it comes to the conceptualization of media education and its many elements in a way which encapsulates and unifies the various theories and schools of thought. This paper is an attempt to fill that gap and provide an illustrative, concise, and cohesive conceptual model of media education based on media education theories in the Nordic tradition, as viewed from a Finnish perspective. It aims to contribute towards the theoretical understanding of media education as a concept, as well as provide a comprehensive description of media education from a Finnish perspective for students, educators, and policy makers.

## Keywords

media education, media education theory, media and information literacy, multiliteracy, ICT competence

## Introduction

The pervasive use of digital media worldwide (Clement, 2019; Miller, Washington, and Miller & Associates, 2015; Poushter, 2016) across a broad demography of people from different age groups and backgrounds has engendered a need for media education, from both a competence perspective (e.g. Hoechsmann & Poyntz, 2012; Kotilainen & Arnolds-Granlund, 2010; Kotilainen & Rantala, 2010; Kupiainen, 2019; Uusitalo, 2010), and a critical perspective (e.g. Ligocki, 2017; Sauerteig, Cervera Gutierrez, Toven-Lindsey & Dahl, 2019). This rise in the perceived need for media education has led to a burgeoning field of study with a plethora of scholars and publications, as well as concerted worldwide efforts by policy makers to educate the public on matters relating to the media. Despite this, it appears that there has yet to be a comprehensive and concise conceptual model of media education which captures the essence of the concept and presents it in a manner which is easily understandable. Neither is there one which attempts to encapsulate and unify the various schools of

thought and the many elements of media education into a cohesive whole. This paper is an endeavour to systematically map and present the various schools of thoughts and theories on the subject and provide not just a comprehensive textual conceptualization of media education but also a clear visual representation of those concepts, as viewed from a Finnish perspective. Towards this end, this paper puts forward the research question: how is media education conceptualized from a Finnish perspective, and within the Nordic context, and what are the various elements of media education and their relationship to one another, as seen from this perspective? The aim of the paper is to contribute towards the theoretical understanding of media education as a concept, as well as provide a holistic, visually illustrated description of media education from a Finnish perspective for students, educators, and policy makers.

Hacking (1999, p. 21) tells us that although ideas are socially constructed, they are also subject to how they are described. Consequently, the effort is made in this paper to conscientiously distil and describe socially constructed ideas and theories regarding what media education is from a Finnish perspective and then build a two-dimensional model from these. Boumans (1999, p. 67) describes model building as being akin to “baking a cake without a recipe” with ingredients consisting of “theoretical ideas, policy views, mathematisations of the cycle, metaphors and empirical facts” and this very accurately represents the creation of this model. This paper follows the principles of theory construction according to the decision methodological approach as described in Kasanen et. al. (1993), in which the aim is to provide theoretical and normative results. Abstraction and idealization are used as methods, with the goal of building a model, for positioning theory and perceptions, explaining the relationships between different phenomena, describing the interactions and dynamics between them, as well as providing a framework for inquiry. In attaining this goal, this paper hopes to contribute to the theoretical discussion surrounding media education and provide a structure for explaining the different aspects of media education and describing their relationships as well as contexts.

## Media education theories

In its simplest form, media education is the pedagogical process of teaching and learning about, with, and through the media (Christensen & Tufte, 2010). The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in a 2009 document 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 include media education as part of the broad-reaching and fundamental Universal Right to Education<sup>1</sup> which is enshrined in article 26 of the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948<sup>2</sup> (Scheuer, 2009). These are excellent definitions of media education and an effective way of describing the term,

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

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

albeit in a simplified manner. They comprise a good starting point from which to build a deeper understanding of what the term “media education” 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. Christensen & Tufte (2010, p. 113) use the term “cross-disciplinary” when defining media education. Similarly, Pekkala et. al. (2013, p. 37) describe media education as an “interdisciplinary” as well as “multidisciplinary” area of research and describe the research reality of media education being dispersed throughout, and interwoven within, various fields of study as a challenge in categorizing research concerning media education in Finland.

Apart from the variations resulting from the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary nature of media education, there are also socio-geographical factors which influence its conceptualization. Kupiainen (2018, pp. 2-5) describes the nuances of the concept of media education across a number of international regions and explains that media studies and education theories “emphasize media education from different perspectives”. Of these examples, two are relevant to this paper: the British model of media education and the Nordic model of media education. These two frameworks were chosen because they appear to be the most valid ones in the Finnish context and also because they represent theoretical consensuses. This leads to an epistemological consideration as the aim then is to present a working synthesis of the theory and position it within context. This is approached by justifying the theoretical models used and taking conceptual stances regarding how they fit with each other and within the context. This is done based on a comprehensive review of the literature and a mapping of media education theories. Thus, the construct is built on theory which is grounded solidly in the literature while simultaneously raising some questions and a slight challenge to these theories. As knowledge on media education and its various elements is relative, in order to avoid the obvious traps relating to logic, the “ideal” or “ultimate” model is not what is aimed for. Rather, what is aimed for is an attempt towards conceptualization and a working model which is also a work-in-progress. The relative and contextual nature of media education will be discussed and considered in the following sections with the purpose of building a justified conceptual stance in the form of a theoretical construct set to context.

### 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 firm that this definition of media education concerns only teaching and learning “*about* the media”, stating explicitly that this 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 regarded by some as the British model of media education.

In pursuing a conceptual framework for media education in the Finnish context, it became apparent that Buckingham’s definition of media education is somewhat restrictive in a number of ways. The fact that Buckingham’s theory limits media education to only teaching and learning “about” the media (thus excluding teaching and learning “through and with” the media) is problematic because it excludes the use of ICT in teaching as a form of media education. Also problematic is the somewhat one-sided focus on young people. Buckingham is not alone in this youth-centric approach, as it seems to be a common thread among media education experts and researchers. It is worth questioning where the space is in the theory and conceptual framework for not-so-young people learning about media education (and learning not only *about* but *with* and *through* the media). As the introduc-

tion to this paper explains, given the current media landscape, media education has become a critical element of social and civic education which should encompass all age groups, young and old alike. In considering these factors, it became clear that a broader and more inclusive theory of media education was needed. The search for such a theory led to further exploration and consideration of the works of other media education scholars, specifically those from within the Nordic region.

### The Nordic model of media education

The Nordic countries have their own definition of media education which “combines learning and teaching in different contexts and *with* and *about* the media” Kupiainen (2018, p. 3). This is regarded as the Nordic model of media education and it includes teaching and learning about and with the media (Erstad, 1997; Christensen & Tufte, 2010; Lundgren, 2014; and Schofield, 2015). Christensen and Tufte, for example, define media education as teaching and learning about, with, and *through* the media, and recommend that this form of media education be “developed as a cross-disciplinary dimension in the educational system”.

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 Nordics also have a long history when it comes to visual media education and visual literacy. 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. It is essential to emphasize that this paper is positioned within the Nordic context, and is influenced by the Nordic perspective on media education, not only because of the geographical location of the authors but also as the result of a conceptual stance.

### The Finnish perspective

The Finnish education system has had a long history with media education, beginning in the 1960s (Kupiainen, Sintonen & Suoranta, 2008). Kupiainen et. al. (2008), for example, chart the evolution of media education over the past decades in Finland. More recently, media education has been included in the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education through public education policy efforts, and frameworks for teaching and learning about and with the media are included in the curriculum. Media education 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 (The Finnish National Board of Education, 2016) which came into effect in 2016 describes seven transversal competencies, some of which include media education elements. The media education elements listed as transversal competencies in the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education of 2014 (FNCC14) are “Multiliteracy”<sup>3</sup> and “ICT Competence”<sup>4</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”. The conceptualizations of multiliteracy and ICT competence in

3. Transversal Competence Number 4 (T4) in the Finnish National Core Curriculum 2014

4. Transversal Competence Number 5 (T5) in the Finnish National Core Curriculum 2014

the FNCC14 were considered important factors in the conceptualization of media education from a Finnish point of view.

### The youth paradox

There appears to be a great emphasis on children and young people when it comes to the literature and research on media education. For example, Christensen and Tufte (2010, p. 113) 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”. Schofield (2015, p. 2) also alludes to media education in the context of young people, as do Buckingham (2003), Hagen (2010), and Kotilainen and Rantala (2010), just to name a few. Yet, ironically, most of the educators, researchers, experts in the field, and indeed students of media education do not necessarily fall under the category of “youth”. Ergo, we the people, of all ages, find ourselves in a domain which seems to be focused and geared only towards the young. Almost as if there were an unspoken, unconscious collective agreement that the non-youth members of society have no need for teaching and learning about and with the media. This is not only erroneous but potentially dangerous and underscores the need to rethink our approach to media education.

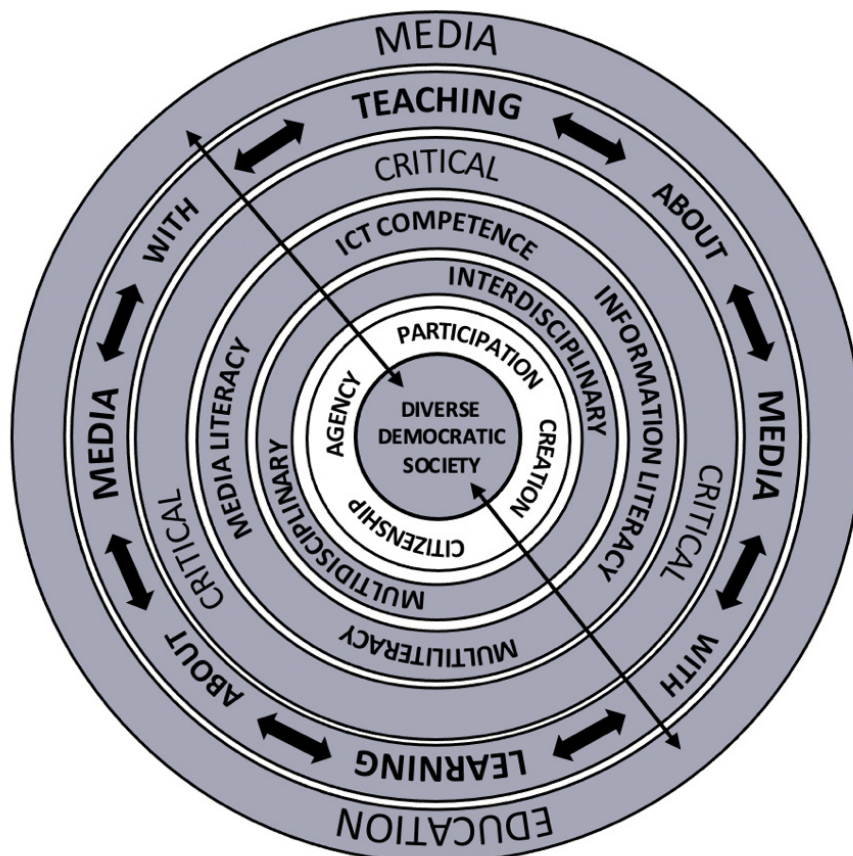
Kupiainen and Sintonen (2010, p. 66) recommend that media education be developed in a manner which “enables teaching to be organized in a way that enhances diversity with an understanding of those being educated as individual learners and thinkers with different biological and psychological faculties”. While they do not specify what they mean by “different biological and psychological faculties”, one could argue 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 paper, and it comes down to one word: diversity. Media education as it is conceptualized in this paper 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; media education should not be conceptualized as a purely youth-centric domain (cf. Buckingham, 2003; Hagen, 2010; Kotilainen & Rantala, 2010). In this post-truth, media-saturated world of filter bubbles, fake news, and misinformation, it is even more crucial for media education to be a pedagogic and civic domain for all, irrespective of age. The question of how media education could be provided to people of all ages is something that experts, policy makers, and stakeholders need to examine and consider. Perhaps one potential solution to this dilemma would be to extend media education beyond the boundaries of basic comprehensive education and into tertiary or adult education, for example. The path forward for “media education for all” could perhaps lie in incorporating media education into the various avenues for adult education such as universities, open universities, technical and vocational training institutions, community centres, vocational programmes and the like.

### An evolving conceptual model

In view of the literature and theories presented in the preceding sections, media education is conceptualized in this paper 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; Christensen & Tufte, 2010; Erstad 1997 and 2006, as cited in Arnolds-Granlund, 2010). Media education is multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary (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>5</sup> and normative<sup>6</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 conceptualized in this paper 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 – also its results are measured not just by knowledge and skills, but by experience (Kupiainen & Sintonen, 2010). To summarize, media education as it is conceptualized in this paper is condensed into a wheel model as illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1** The Wheel Model of Media Education (adapted from Michael, 2020, p. 20)

5. Reflecting how individuals act (Arnolds-Granlund, 2010, p. 46).

6. Discussing how individuals should act (Arnolds-Granlund, 2010, p. 46).

The model above is a visual summary of the various elements of media education and how they relate to each other. It is an endeavour to conceptualize media education (as seen from the Finnish perspective) into a comprehensive and inclusive framework, drawing from and merging the media education theories and definitions of Buckingham (2003), Christensen and Tufte (2010), Erstad (2010), Kupiainen and Sintonen (2010), and Schofield (2015), among others. It also represents the conceptual stance taken by the authors of this paper regarding media education. The model resembles a wheel with an outer rim, inner rims, spokes, a hub, and a centre bore. The outer rim represents media education as the larger umbrella concept. It encompasses all aspects 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 elements 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 interdisciplinary, as portrayed by the final inner rim of the 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 centre bore. The centre bore itself represents a diverse and democratic society as a whole, which includes people of all ages, genders, and backgrounds. The spokes in the model are a crucial element because they indicate how each of the elements in the model, from the outer rim to the centre bore, are connected to one another and influence each other. This model illustrates that ultimately, media education affects society, and vice versa. The layers of the model affect each other; and all are needed for the wheel to function as a cohesive whole. There is room in the model for growth and expansion. As technology and the field of media education evolve, new rims and components can be added to the model. The model can also be adapted and applied to conceptualize more specific areas within media education.

### The key elements of the wheel model

#### **Media and education**

In conceptualizing media education, it is vital to define the key words “media” and “education” in the term. From the Finnish perspective of media education, media is not viewed as a separate entity but as “an integral part of everyday life, practices and culture” (Pekkala et al. 2013, p. 10). “Media” in the context of this paper refers to a wide range of media. These include, but are not restricted to, electronic media, analogue and digital media, film, radio, and interactive media. By default, whenever “media” is mentioned in this paper, it includes 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. This broad definition of media is concurrent with that of Buckingham (2003), Christensen and Tufte (2010), and Potter (2004). In defining the term “media”, Braesel and 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 to not “insulate” (McDougall, 2014) the various forms of media in this conceptual model.

“Education” in the wheel model refers to all forms of structured teaching and learning, both formal and informal (Dib, 1988; Ellis, 1990) with the end result being the “continued capacity for growth” (Dewey, 1916, p. 100).

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, exploring 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 teaching about the media as well as with and through the media.

### **Teaching and learning “about” and “with” the media**

Media education in the wheel model includes all teaching and learning “about” and “with” the media as conceptualized by the Nordic model of media education (Erstad, 1997; Christensen & Tufte, 2010; Lundgren, 2014; and Schofield, 2015). Teaching and learning “about” the media pertains to teaching and learning concerning the media, towards the goal of creating awareness and understanding about the media itself and its various aspects, forms, functions, issues, challenges, and affordances. Teaching and learning “with” the media refers to teaching and learning through the use of media, in other words, using various media (and particularly digital and online media) for the purpose of teaching and learning a variety of subjects, including about the media. For example, remote (or distance) learning is included within the semantics of “with” and “through” the media. The conceptual stance in this paper is that using online platforms, software, and tools for the purpose of teaching and learning is considered learning with and through the use of media; the “media” in this case referring to the platforms, software, and tools used. The conceptualization of media education as the practice of teaching and learning about and with the media is particularly timely in this post-pandemic reality we live in, where teaching and learning activities have been forced to move online, thereby resulting in teaching and learning in many places around the world being conducted with and through the use of online and digital media. Further research concerning this phenomenon as well as the features, affordances, and challenges of media education in the third spaces of online platforms is much needed.

### **The critical perspective**

The wheel model emphasizes the idea that all media education should be approached from a critical perspective. There should not be any teaching and learning about and with the media which is not ultimately subject to a critical approach. This involves examining and questioning sources, power structures, roles, voices, and representations, among other things. A critical approach towards media, and the skills associated with that, is understood to be an essential and central feature of media education as conceptualized in the wheel model. It is presumed that media education is an inherently critical endeavour in and of itself, or at least it should be. This critical perspective is based along the lines of critical media literacy as proposed by Grizzle and Singh (2016), Kellner and Share (2007), Ligoeki (2017), UNESCO (2011), and the European Commission (2019).



### **Media and information literacy**

Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is 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 regarded by some as the result of media education (e.g. Buckingham, 2003). Media literacy as conceptualized in the wheel model 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. It is a convergent concept which is a hybrid of the various schools of thought over the past twenty years. It includes the media literacy theories of Buckingham (2003), Hobbs (2010), Hobbs and Moore (2013), Kupiainen and Sintonen (2010), Megee (1997), and Ugur and Harro-Loit (2010), among others.

### **Multiliteracy**

Multiliteracy is an element in the wheel model which conceptualizes media education from a Finnish perspective. “Multiliteracy” is one of two key terms by which media education is represented 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). Since the inception of the term, the concept of multiliteracy has been applied to an extensive range of academic disciplines (Mills, 2009, p. 104). 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 (The Finnish National Board of Education, 2016). Multiliteracy in the curriculum also includes visual literacy (see for example, Messaris 1994, 1998) through visual media and modes of expression (Halinen et. al., 2015, p. 142). Halinen et. al. explain 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” (2015, p. 143). Together, these descriptions of multiliteracy describe the term as conceptualized in this paper.

### **Information and communication technology (ICT) competence**

“ICT competence” in the context of the wheel model refers to skills and competencies, devices and tools, as well as pedagogies; and all within an educational context and application. This is in accordance with Zuppo’s (2015) framing of ICT which is also echoed in the Nordic context. For example, Tømte (2015, p. 140) explains that ICT in education encompasses a diverse range of topics which include “competences toward the use of various digital tools and digital technologies”. ICT, as conceptualized in the wheel model, is an integral part of media education, with media education as the larger elevated concept which includes ICT (Arnolds-Granlund, 2010; Kupiainen, 2018). ICT is represented in the FNCC14 by the term “ICT Competence”, which in the context of this paper refers to the capabilities and proficiencies in using technology pertaining to information and communi-

cation. From the Finnish perspective, it is considered an integral part of learning for individual students, as well as the school community, and includes learning about different ICT applications and their use as well as their importance in daily life (The Finnish National Board of Education, 2014).

#### **Agency, reflection, collaboration, and culture**

Media education as conceptualized in this paper is based on the four main concepts of agency, reflection, collaboration, and culture, as proposed by Kupiainen and 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.

#### **Diverse democratic society**

The centre bore of the wheel model is a diverse and democratic society. This represents the idea that teaching and learning about and with the media should be an inclusive practice which concerns and includes all members of society, regardless of gender, age, intellectual and physical ability, or social and economic backgrounds. Media education is the property of all and a fundamental human right (Scheuer, 2009). The centre bore also alludes to the idea that media education in its truest form is a democratic exercise which can only function in a democratic society. It has a causal relationship with democracy and democratic values: media education and all its elements are vital in sustaining a truly democratic society and a truly democratic society is vital in sustaining media education. Therefore, all the parts of the wheel model exist in symbiotic relationship with each other, each influencing and sustaining the other. The stance in this paper is that the "I" (or the person), in relation to the model, is both an individual as well as a part of the whole. An isolated individual completely cut off from the "us" and "we" of society does not fit within the media education conceptualized in this paper. Media education connects and always relates back to society as a whole. The individual, therefore, is at the heart of the model, and is ensconced within the entity labelled "diverse democratic society".

#### **Discussion and conclusion**

This paper provided a conceptual framework for understanding, analysing, and discussing media education. It presented a conceptual model of media education with the aim of providing a clear visual representation of media education and its various elements. Media education in this paper is conceptualized as teaching and learning about and with the media in its various forms, from a critical perspective, through elements such as media literacy, information literacy, multiliteracy, and ICT competence. It is both interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary, and includes the elements of citizenship, agency, participation, and creation.

Media education is for everyone and plays an integral role in the functions of a diverse and democratic society.

The model presented and discussed in this paper is operationalized theory and serves as a map for future research endeavours. There is a significant lean in the construction of the model towards the pragmatic approach, rather than an explanation of relational rules as applies in the syntactic approach or a hierarchical model of a semantic approach. The syntactical approach to theory and model making concerns abstract structures of the elements within a model, but the semantic approach pertains to meanings and representations of those elements (see Winther, 2015). The pragmatic approach, on the other hand, explores practical use and was utilized in the creation of this model, due to the nature of media education as a phenomenon. The descriptions and explanations of media education and its elements are influenced by the praxis, actors, and practical applications of language when explaining the nature, extent, and magnitude of it. The model is built on perceptions of reality and the theories and conceptual stances built on those perceptions. As is often the case in the social sciences, the relative nature of knowledge calls for a pragmatic approach as is taken in this paper. This helps to prevent the risk of building a model with no explanatory function because it is far too general, which can be avoided by being pragmatic rather than axiomatic. Even when it comes to more restrictive fields such as biology, for example, the abstraction based on identification, individuation, and measurement is based on the recognized properties of the items, functions, or actions (Winther 2009). Although there have been some attempts to build general social theories on human action, these rarely fit such rigorous frames. The robustness of construct requires context, as anything describing or modelling human action does not function on an abstract level. Such a requirement comes from the notion that “scientific” realism is about providing as truthful a picture as possible with the given means, tools, and methods (Suppe, 1989).

The model presented in this paper is a humble attempt to conceptualize aspects of media education in a scholarly way, and yet allow sufficient space for conflicting views and challenges, as well as natural evolution in the media and education landscape and corresponding theories, in order to bring something of value to the table, and meaningfully affect the discussion surrounding media education. Further research is needed to expand on the concepts and elements contained in the wheel model. As discussed in Rosch (2002), this paper provides a basic level of taxonomization: in other words, a prototype to be further evaluated, tested, and elaborated in future research. As the method utilized is about logically putting theoretical pieces together, the actual goodness, soundness, and practical value of the model will need to be assessed in the future (see Kasanen et. al. 1993).

The wheel model is not a destination, but a starting point. Like the symbolic wheel itself, it is a tool intended to move one towards a destination. The title of this paper is indicative of this fact: it does not claim to present a conclusive consummate model, rather it presents a sincere effort “towards” a working conceptual model. In other words, this is a work in progress. It is an invitation for collaboration, co-creation, and inevitable criticism. In the true spirit of Web 2.0, this also extends to an invitation for remixing, readapting, and reconstructing. It is hoped that this paper will contribute towards the understanding of media education, spark discussion over the subject, and invite further contribution towards the conceptual framework and model presented for the benefit of students, educators, and policy makers.

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