



**EDCP 481**  
**Media Studies (Across the Curriculum)**  
S. Petrina (2016)

**What is Media Education?**

In 1999, at the "[Educating for the Media and the Digital Age](#)" conference, UNESCO (1999, pp. 263-274) adopted the following definition of media education:

1. Deals with all communication media and includes the printed word and graphics, the sound, the still as well as the moving image, delivered on any kind of technology;
2. enables people to gain understanding of the communication media used in their society and the way they operate and to acquire skills using these media to communicate with others;
3. ensures that people learn how to
  1. analyze, critically reflect upon and create media texts;
  2. identify the sources of media texts, their political, social, commercial and/or cultural interests, and their contexts;
  3. interpret the messages and values offered by the media;
  4. select appropriate media for communicating their own messages or stories and for reaching their intended audience;
  5. gain or demand access to media for both reception and production.

By this time, it had become clear that media education and literacy were among the most important subjects for addressing changes at the dawn of the 21st century. Media convergence and technological innovation marked these changes for children and seniors alike. A key question was whether formal educational systems could change to address cultural and social challenges at hand. Activists and critics were concerned that educators were dragging their heels in a failure to redress the curriculum.

In British Columbia in the mid 1990s, for example, media education was adopted as a "cross curricular outline," or something to be integrated across existing subjects. This integration was required but our research in the late 2000s indicated that most teachers had their hands full with the required curriculum and were not integrating media education. As a cross curriculum outline, BC defines media education as:

***What is Media Education?***

Media education is a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach to the study of media. Media education deals with key media concepts, and focuses on broad issues such as the history and role of media in different societies, and the social, political, economic, and cultural issues related to the media. Instead of addressing the concepts in depth, as one would in media studies, media education deals with most of the central media concepts as they relate to a variety of subjects.

## ***Why Media Education in B.C. Schools?***

Popular music, television, film, radio, magazines, computer games, and information services, media, and media messages are pervasive in the lives of students today. Media education develops students' ability to think critically and independently about issues that affect them. Media education encourages students to identify and examine the values contained in media messages. It also cultivates the understanding that these messages are produced by others to inform, persuade, and entertain for a variety of purposes. Media education helps students understand the distortions that may result from the use of particular media practices and techniques. There are learning opportunities for media education in all curriculum areas. Media education is not taught as a separate curriculum.

The **key concepts** for media education are:

- analysis of media products (purpose, values, representation, codes, conventions, characteristics, and production)
- audience interpretation and influence (interpretation, influence of media on audience, influence of audience on media)
- media and society (control, scope)

But much, if not all, of this was thrown into question with the introduction of [BC's new curriculum in 2016-2019](#). So we begin this course with questions concerning the politics and sociology of curriculum. Why or how do courses become official while others are reduced to unofficial or non-required status? Is media education important enough to be required?

There are [eight official “curriculum subject areas” identified by the BC Ministry of Education](#):

- Applied Design, Skills, and Technologies (ADST)
- Arts Education
- Career Education
- Languages: English, French Immersion & International Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Physical Education & Health Education
- Science
- Social Studies

Why eight? Why these eight? Should there be more than eight? If so, which subjects ought to be included among the “official subject areas”? ADST includes Business Education, Home Economics and Culinary Arts, Information and Communications Technology, and Technology Education, but why not Media Education?

From 1995 until 2016, Media Education was among those defined as “cross-curricular outlines:”

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applied Focus in Curriculum</li><li>• Career Development</li><li>• Diversity and Social Justice / Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• First Nations Studies</li><li>• Gender Equity</li><li>• Information Technology</li><li>• <b>Media Education</b></li></ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• English as a Second Language (ESL)</li><li>• Environment and Sustainability</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Science-Technology-Society</li><li>• Special Needs</li></ul>
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But for BC's new curriculum, the "cross-curricular outlines" were excluded. Some necessarily were moved into other components "core competencies" of the new curriculum.

What are your insights? Ought media education be a stand-alone formal course or ought it be limited to informal integration? In EDCP 481, we provide resources and knowledge for you to design media education or media studies courses as well as integrate in your curriculum, whether in or outside of the schools.

UNESCO raised the stakes by acknowledging that "Media education is part of basic entitlement of every citizen, in every country in the world, to freedom of expression and the right to information and is instrumental in building and sustaining democracy" (UNESCO, 1999, p. 274).