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An exploration of media literacy in South Africa and a model for tertiary education

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2003

Thesis submitted according
to the requirements for the degree
Philosophiae Doctor
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Preface ...

If the mass media play such an important role in our lives, are we their victims or their masters? That is, are we managed, manipulated, massaged, and brainwashed by the media, or do the media simply reflect us and our wishes, our purchases in the marketplace, our attention and our dial twirling and page turning? The best answer is probably a combination of both. We still do not know enough about the process to make final judgments. **One thing does seem clear: the more we know about a subject, the less we can be misled about it. Those with a perspective on the process and an understanding of the increasing inter-relatedness of industries and of media formats and functions will be able to discriminate between what is artificial in mass communication and what has value** (Hiebert, Ungurait & Bohn 1991:18).

" ... Every use of the media presupposes manipulation. There is no such thing as unmanipulated writing, filming, or broadcasting. The question is therefore not whether the media are manipulated, but who manipulates them. **A revolutionary plan should not require the manipulators to disappear, on the contrary, it must make everyone a manipulator** ... the manipulation of the media cannot be countered, by old or new forms of censorship, **but only by direct social control, that is to say, by the mass of people** (Enzensberger 1974: 95).

(Bold text highlighted by researcher for emphasis.)

Dedication ...

For my two ultimate joys in life:
my daughters, Mia and Greta —
for all their valuable teachings
about practical media literacy,
and for keeping me grounded in reality.

For my other two pillars of strength throughout life:
my Father and my Mother —
for everything they do for me and their granddaughters,
and for their unwavering love.

And for my God and Saviour —
for endless grace.

Sincerest gratitude to...

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for precious criticism, logic, patience and insight,
and for many Coke-filled hours of discussions.
You are a wonderful friend.

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for his valuable advice and teachings,
particularly on good language and style,
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I will miss you enormously.
And for **Elna**, for all the empathy.

Soulmate Sunita, for her concern, editing,
proofreading and involvement.
For other **soulmates, Ilsé and Tertia.**
My dearest friends,
who always cheered me on.
I love you all dearly.

Dr Kobus van Zyl, for understanding,
passion and encouragement.

My parents,
for helping me in every way they could and can,
and for many years of patience and trust.

Mia and Greta,
for all their patience and impatience,
their unconditional love and outspoken honesty,
their enthusiastic interest in the media,
and their disinterest in my academic ratings and rantings.

My **God and Creator**:
with gratitude and praise for all the opportunities and grace.

Abstract

Although the discipline of media studies is not new to the broad academic field of Communication Science, the phenomenon of media literacy in the media studies landscape is not so familiar. The state of affairs pertaining to the ever-growing, ubiquitous mass media in the third millennium and its potential effects on individuals and society increasingly preoccupy many researchers and other stake-holders, particularly in view of the fact that it is virtually impossible to separate the presence and possible effects of the media from society. In short, the mass media create and maintain popular and mass culture, confirming the traditional theoretical function as prominent carriers of culture and instruments of socialization .

The transactional perspective of communication has been transposed in this thesis to the context of mass media consumers at the receiving end of mass communication via the mass media. Studies have waylaid the initial perspective of the hypodermic needle theories, in the sense that these audiences do not always seem to be completely passive and at the mercy of the mass media as so-called victims, but that these consumers actually do play an active role in terms of their selection and choice of media and formats. The latter perspective heralded the user gratification chapters in the media effects history. Media literacy, however, takes this active role even further, and aims to empower and teach *ordinary people*, specifically young people who are often viewed as most susceptible audiences of mass media messages, to critically evaluate and mindfully decode the mass media contents.

In the face of the overwhelming volume of communication and information messages surrounding the modern-day citizen, audiences can obviously lose control of their media exposure or "diets", consequently affecting their mindful judgment of these contents. Aspects such as violence, promiscuity and uninhibited sex, swearing and profanity, crime and materialism, amongst many others, often seem to be the driving force behind the mass media producers who find themselves mostly profit- and consumer-driven, as most media formats (e.g. newspapers, magazines, radio, television, film, advertisements and the Internet) are indeed and essentially businesses

who can best survive by supplying popular sensation at a price to the avid consumers. Studies on the audience's psychological relationship with the media suggest that these consumers often possibly prefer not to critically choose the contents of their media diet, but thrive on a senseless absorbing thereof for various reasons.

Media literacy is already an established and independent school curriculum in most of the First World countries *inter alia* Canada, America, Hawaii, Britain, Scotland, France, Finland, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. However, traces of media education with the desired outcome of media literate media consumers by means of various so-called media literacy approaches and techniques, seem to be sparse in the South African context. If the phenomenon of media literacy is encountered at all, it is where mere strains of the concept are included in other subjects in order to facilitate the learning of the primary subjects such as Languages, Cultural Studies, History or Human Sciences; not necessarily comprising knowledge content and skills pertaining to the mass media itself.

Media literacy is a vital life-skill for any person interacting with the profuse mass media in modern-day society, and with the necessary knowledge and development of skills, all learners can enhance their enjoyment of the mass media when they are media literate. While censorship of detrimental media content is not advised, prolific studies speculate about the link between societal problems and the mass media content, leaving media academics and scholars at an *impasse* with these powerful "mass cultural agents".

Media literacy activities aim to furnish learners with knowledge about the nature and characteristics of the mass media as well as specific issues such as stereotyping, gender portrayals, violence, media hegemony, the creation of mass and popular culture and other effects of the media. Learners can acquire both cognitive and emotional facilities as well as psycho-motor skills in order to access, decode, evaluate and analyze different media formats and contents. The vital conative aspect — implying the conscious choice to manage media exposure — can also be redressed when consumers become enlightened about the nature and role of the mass media.

Essentially, media literacy is *critical thinking* applied to the mass media. Its contents aim to furnish learners with discerning capabilities, in order to eventually improve the quality of individuals' lives and promote social justice by the application of evaluation of values amongst other aspects. Ultimately, a media literate society can produce more creative, individualistic and independent-thinking citizens, thus raising the standards of a democracy in the fullest sense of the word, and giving embodiment to many of the clauses of the Constitution such as that of free speech and access to information.

Metaphorically speaking, it can be asked why numerous people carefully balance their *food* intake, but are seldom concerned about their *media* diets. Health warnings about the inherent dangers of smoking, alcohol, fatty foods and cholesterol are rife, whilst education for general and ordinary media consumers about the effects of alleged "unhealthy" media content seems to be rare. In the same manner that parents teach children how to navigate the potentially dangerous realm of traffic and roads, young people and future media workers — all ordinary people indeed — should be educated how to negotiate the latent dangers of the mass media. Although literature produces many and various approaches to the teaching of media literacy, there is a prominent lack of South African academic material and research on the subject. The primary goal of this study therefore is the development of a model for teaching media literacy on a tertiary level in South Africa, and to elucidate the currently fragmented and young discipline of media literacy on an international level in the face of the many different perspectives and definitions ascribed to the subject.

It is lastly suggested that this study should also be seen as a form of *societal criticism*, which falls in the cadre of the relationship between the mass media and its consumers. A society with critical-thinking individuals and audiences who can ask pertinent questions about the content of the mass media, can raise the quality of the mass media's content and so compel the media industries and professionals to enter into a more transactional and interactional relationship with their audiences via the media, who can learn to maintain a balanced approach to the media as a result of increased media literacy. Education about the mass media industry, its contents and possible effects is the only solution to assist consumers in not being misled continuously by the media.

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Chapter 1

Contextualisation of the study

In this chapter the following aspects will be discussed:

- Introduction to the study
- Identification of the research problem
- Formulation of the research questions
- Purpose, goal and objectives of the study
- Implementing the qualitative research paradigm
- Research design and methodology
- The communication perspective on media literacy followed in this study
- Assumptions of the study
- Delimitation of the study
- Potential value and contribution of the study to existing research
- Exposition of chapters and structuring of the thesis
- Referencing techniques
- Glossary of media literacy terminology

"Media education is a quest for meaning. Much of the value of a quest lies in the search itself as well as in the achievement of the goal." (Worsnop 2002)

1.1 Introduction to the study

It is literally impossible to conjecture a picture of any modern society without the ubiquitous presence of the mass media in all its diversity and formats. The term "mass media" refers to all those channels, instruments and equipment by means of which mass communication occurs, and serves as a broad term to encapsulate newspapers, magazines, television, radio, film, video, compact discs and digital video/versatile discs, tapes, the Internet, posters, billboards, publicity material and many other outdoor-carriers of mass messages.

These media know no geographical borders and can reach enormous audiences on a 24-hour basis across the world (Biagi 2003: 19; Marris & Thornham 1996: 15). Sardar and Van Loon (2000: 8) elaborate as follows on the extent of exposure to the modern mass media: "On average, we spend over 15 years of our waking lives just watching television. Films, videos and the time spent reading newspapers and magazines, listening to music and surfing the Net, means that we spend one-third of our lives immersed in the media." In *Rapport* (Du Plessis 2002: 30), a new bestseller book titled *Funky Business* (Ridderstrale & Nordstrom 2002) is quoted, which alleges that the average American sees 247 television advertisements carried by the mass media per day, whereas the young 18-year old American has seen 350 000 of these by the time of going to college.

All indications are that the breadth of this exposure and the spectrum of mass media channels form part of an upwards spiral as the "media revolution" increasingly picks up speed and recreates itself from day to day (Du Plooy 2001:14), sometimes leaving many bewildered people in its wake. Scholars are also of the opinion that the media will be the key to the establishment of the so-called new order through globalization (Baran & Davis 2003: 362). As a result of this "seemingly never-ending barrage" and "data smog" of the mass media (Murray 1998), new terminology, such as "sensory and

information overload" (Nellis 1997; Rutsky 1999; Turner 2002) and "information fatigue syndrome" (Gillespie 1997) are becoming part of our vocabulary.

However, these consequences are not the only attributed to exposure to the modern mass media. Many authors also argue that these media shape our abilities to speak, think, form relationships with others; even our dreams as well as our sense of identity are affected (Fourie 2001b: 327; Merril, Lee & Friedlander 1990: 71; Sardar & Van Loon 2000: 8; Whetmore 1993: 10).

Against this background the mass media is often labelled as "the most significant and unprecedented social phenomenon of this century" (Drucker 1993), affecting every sphere of societal and community life, *inter alia*, politics, economy, education, the arts, sports, culture, language and religion. The mass media in its totality and richness have therefore become integral parts of the lives of most members of modern societies, and the challenges facing the field of mass communication seem greater than ever before (De Beer 2000; Fourie 2001a; Hart 1997; Littlejohn 1999; Mersham & Skinner 2001; Sardar & Van Loon 2000; Severin & Tankard 2001; Silverblatt, Ferry & Finan 1999).

1.1.1 Effects of the mass media

Praise and appreciation for the constructive functions performed by the mass media in society, and delight in the technological wonders of the mass media have historically always gone hand in hand with severe criticism and radical warnings, particularly about issues such as violence, smoking, physical appearance and social identity, morals, sexual promiscuity and stereotyping, religious aspects such as the use of profanities and marital infidelity, to name but a few specific matters (see Chapter 3.5).

As a result, the 1930s Frankfurt School thinkers (cf. During 2001; Fourie 2001a; Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant & Kelly 2003: 69) and philosophers such as Baudrillard, Adorno, Horkheimer and Gramsci (in Avery & Eason 1991: 131; Baran & Davis 2003: 231; Ward 1997: 78), amongst others, saw the mass media almost as a "malignant force", providing the masses with "shallow passive experience", as well as a

questionable construction of reality based on ideological and commercial interests (Branston & Stafford 1996: 155; Silverblatt et al. 1999:4).

However, reflections like these on the effects of the mass media are not new. The history of the effect theories and studies first gathered momentum during the 1930s and 1940s, when the newly established field of communication studies quickly burgeoned into specialized interest in the mass media and its effects on audiences. Fourie (2001a: 241) confirms that the development of critical thinking on mass communication has a long history originating in classical times, when citizens complained about the abuse of the media for political propaganda. Although different historical interpretations have been found in literature, studies on the effects of the mass media can be divided into several distinct phases.

The first broad movement of the effect perspectives of the mass media saw it as being virtual hypodermic needles or magical bullets (according to the approach of the Frankfurt School in the 1940s in Alasuutari 1999; During 2001; Sardar & Van Loon 2000; Severin & Tankard 2001), penetrating the audience with all kinds of unwanted messages, values, ideas and attitudes and leaving behind transformed human beings. This perspective saw the consumer as passive and helpless against the media's effects. Fourie (2001a: 295) states that even though these concerns were unfounded, it still flares up periodically under particularly moralists and politicians.

While these theories on mass communication saw the media as "the most pervasive ideological agent in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century society" (Fourie 2001a: 241), this perspective was followed by a more progressive view in terms of the limited effects and two-step flow theories, which can be condensed by Berelson's statement (1949: 500) that "some kinds of communication on some kinds of issues, brought to the attention of some kinds of people under some kinds of conditions, have some kinds of effects". Both of these schools' perspectives that the media user is still passive, but acting as part of a society and culture, introduced the next phase of effect studies, asking what people do with the media, thus giving rise to the user gratification models and theories (McQuail 2000).

This school of thinking claimed that people are indeed active consumers of the media in terms of the choices that they exercised when selecting and using the media for purposes such as diversion, surveillance and identity (Fourie 2001a: 297). Although the latter theories attempted to address the concern of academics and scholars about the effects of the media, the concerns did not disappear, and studies on the effects of the mass media and its contents are rifer than ever.

Many people and groups supporting the initial perspective on the effect of the mass media, where receivers are almost viewed as helpless against the media's effects, blame today's "mass cultural machines" (Baran & Davis 2003: 16; Sardar & Van Loon 2000: 16) for many ills and wrongs in society. In an attempt to deal with these alleged negative effects, they propose diverse counter-measures to the extended impact and influence of the mass media. This can occur by means of limited exposure, and restricted mass media interaction for both children and adults, while other extremists even sometimes go as far as to propagate total abolishment of the mass media. For example, a Canadian initiative labeled *TV Turnoff Week,* now turning international and celebrated on 29 November 2002 (http://jellspace.net/tv/infom.html), as well as the annual international *Adbusters' Buy Nothing Day* (http://adbusters.org), have been implemented in various countries e.g. Canada, the USA, England, Finland, France and Germany underline this sentiment in part.

What has become clear from past research and literature reviews, however, is that constant radical accusations and warnings about the effects of the mass media seldom contribute towards real and constructive solutions for the perceived mass media dilemma in the end. On the other hand, Harris (2001: 51) admonishes that "[v]ery often when we critically examine media, we are left with the feeling that there is much we do not like, for whatever reason, but that there is little we can do about that state of affairs other than choose not to use the medium (e.g. watch the program, read the paper, etc.) we do not care for." Such a passive approach to person-media interaction is likely to reveal the same lack of real and constructive solutions.

It can be concluded that the mass media do have a certain impact on its audiences (Biagi 2003: 19: Lister et al. 2003: 63), for better or for worse. Fourie (2001a: 241) condenses this state of affairs by saying that "there is hardly a person who does not

come into contact with media of one or another kind and the ideas and values they convey ...". Isolation from the media, as already stated, remains an impractical and unnecessary precaution to limit specific consequences such as mass consumerism, mass culture, mindless exposure to negative content, and naïveté about the world-at-large portrayed by the mass media. However, this should not, now even more than ever before in the face of the abundance of the media, imply that this acute dilemma surrounding the so-called popular "Merchants of Cool" (Bybee 2001) which are the alleged purveyors of a "Culture of Capitalism" (Lear 2001), be left unanswered.

1.1.2 The need to study the mass media in a popular culture context

To deal responsibly, intelligently and effectively not only with real or imaged effects of media exposure on an individual level, but also with the mass media in general as one of the most significant, unprecedented and omni-present phenomena of our time, affecting every sphere of societal and community life, requires knowledge and insight that originate from deliberate, continuous and intensive study of this particular facet of our daily reality.

The consequent importance of studying the mass media in macro- and micro-contexts is implicated as Sullivan (1983: 304) summarized it succinctly by saying that "[t]he objective of the human sciences is the deepening of our understanding of what it is to live a human life". With the profusion of mass media messages "bombarding" members of modern societies, the need to better understand the media-world humans live in and are exposed to every day, is concrete and real, as Maxwell (1984: 73) has validated: "The primary intellectual aim of the humanities and social inquiry, quite generally, is to help us to realize what is of value to us in our personal and social lives. What ultimately matters is personal and social progress toward enlightenment and wisdom ...".

Studying the media as a facet of our reality should also incorporate the context in which the mass media operate — the so-called popular and secular culture of the masses (see 2.5.7). This cultural context needs intensified scrutiny and research, if human and social science scholars and researchers are serious about deepening our

understanding of our reality at large. No longer can the social and human sciences afford to focus restrictively on "high-culture", literature and art (cf. Fourie 2001a; Hart 1991; Kubey & Csikszentimihalyi 1990; Lusted 1991).

However, the outcome of studying the mass media is not just about empowering receivers to understand the media-world and interact constructively with this facet of our reality. As the "mediamorphosis" (Biagi 2003: 42) escalates, the ensuing need to study the mass media and particularly its effects on consumers and the latter's relationship with it, will also increase. In the process more professional, knowledgeable, skilled and (at times) responsible media workers can also be produced with more insight into the issues, dilemmas and concerns related to mass communication and its role in society – thus satisfying the escalating demand for practitioners academically grounded in this encompassing field.

1.1.3 Development of media studies[1] as an academic discipline

The latest reviewed literature reveals no set and standard definition of media studies, but in this thesis media studies will be broadly circumscribed as a relatively young, distinctive field of study with rapidly-growing, contemporary and self-sufficient theories, models and methodologies, focusing on the process, concepts, components, contents and effects of the mass media. The aim in this case is to equip both academics and media practitioners with operational and/or analytical skills relevant to the mass media industry, production and even analysis of genres, texts and grammar. (A more extensive discussion on the nature of media studies will follow later in the thesis in Chapter 2.5.1.)

In an age where society is saturated by media content of all kinds, it is understandable why media studies is becoming one of the most prevalent choices of study among students at many universities, colleges and technikons, both nationally and internationally (Murray 2002). In a recent report in *The Times (*Owen 2001), it is also acknowledged that media studies is nowadays one of the most "fashionable and

[1] For the sake of continuity, the term *media studies* will be typed in lower case, regardless of references to the study discipline and subject which actually necessitate the use of capital letters, or to the phenomenon of media studies itself in general terms.

trendy" subjects of choice amongst students at the expense of more traditional disciplines such as psychology. In the Afrikaans niche magazine *Insig* (January/February 2003: 90), Smith reports that media and film studies are currently seen as *the* courses with which students are currently lured to faculties of humanities everywhere.

A mere decade or two ago many tertiary educational institutions perceived media studies as trivial and "too concerned with the secular and popular" and therefore not qualifying as a serious field of academic study (Buckingham & Sefton-Green 1994: 1; Fourie 2001a: xix). In this regard note should be taken of the response of one of the figures most prominent in literature in the academic and popular media literacy field, and President of the Association for Media Literacy, Rick Shepherd (1993): "We study the media because it is through the media that our culture expresses itself and communicates with itself. Certainly one could argue that much of what we see or hear or read in the media is trivial, but I cannot bring myself to believe that human beings themselves or their interests are trivial".

The growth of media studies may be linked to a postmodernist emphasis on the centrality of the media, which challenges earlier assumptions that there is a clear distinction between the world of the mass media and the world of social reality. The traditionally separated cultural studies of the seventies and the eighties of the previous century, in which the Marxist approach was central, collapsed according to McRobbie (1994), leaving a void at the heart of cultural studies, and which is currently filled by the young and evolved discipline of media studies.

Many teachers all over the world have been using films, television programmes, music, posters and newspapers in their teaching as stimuli or aids to learning. However, the growing international tendency to include the media not only as *channel* for learning about other subjects such as the languages, cultural studies and life-skills, but as an independent — and often compulsory — subject of learning is noticeable in the formulation of curricula aiming to include knowledge about the nature and characteristics of the media industry itself (Landay 1995: 19; Owen 2001:4; Silverblatt, Baker, Tyner & Stuhlman 2002).

1.1.4 Development of media literacy[2] as a distinctive field of study

Gerbner states that children are born into homes where the primary storytellers are mainly a small group of global conglomerates that have something to sell, and where the media "coalesce into a seamless, pervasive and increasingly homogenized cultural environment that has drifted out of democratic reach" (Gerbner 1995: 1). Here Gerbner insists that media literacy, *being critical media awareness*, can serve as a new approach to a liberal education on every level thinkable. Fourie (2001a: xx) emphasizes likewise that there is an "increased awareness amongst a growing population of media users about the role of the media in their lives and the need to understand this role."

Finding a common understanding of the term *media literacy* proved to be a daunting task, due to a vast array of different and, at times, even conflicting approaches to the nature of this specific field of study which has mainly gained momentum during the nineties. However, in an attempt to describe the nature of media literacy, two key concepts mentioned in the previous paragraph were used as points of departure in this thesis, namely "critical awareness" and "media users". The best — and maybe the only — method to ensure functional rather than dysfunctional media use, will be therefore to equip individual users with "user skills" (Biagi 2003: 374). (A full discussion on some definitions and descriptions of media literacy as concept and process can be found in Chapter 2.2, as well as a list with 50 of these statements in Appendix A.)

It will be argued in this thesis that media literacy, as a field of study, is primarily aimed at empowering *ordinary people, particularly on grass-roots level,* as media users by means of creating a growing level of critical awareness when it specifically comes to understanding the following aspects:

- the role that the media play in their lives;
- the decoding, interpretation or evaluation of media messages;
- the popular culture context in which these messages are presented; and

[2] For the sake of continuity once again, the term *media literacy* will be used in lowercase letters only, regardless of references to the study area and subject which actually calls for capital letters.

- the implications of exposure to these media content which may have certain effects and consequences.

Landay (1995: 19) makes mention of "a new movement for media literacy ... in classrooms, teachers' training workshops, adult study forums and homes, the campaign for media literacy is a quiet but pervasive response to the growth of commercial media power ... [providing] the counterforce that empowers viewers, listeners and readers to become media-wise; to bring a critical eye and ear to what they see and hear, and to talk back to the tube".

According to the approach followed in this thesis, media literacy, as a field of study, is and will always be closely related to media studies as an academic discipline, since the specific analytical skills and knowledge contents operationalized in media literacy stems from media studies. However, according to the line of thinking expressed in this thesis (which will be discussed in more detail later), the main differences between media literacy and media studies can be related to *different target audiences* (ordinary media users vs. media practitioners and academics). While media studies emphasize a more in-depth and academic contemplation of the theories, models and methodologies related to the process, concepts, components, contents and effects of the mass media, media literacy presents mere elements of this former body of knowledge (which are deemed necessary for the creation of critical awareness). Media literacy operates more *selectively* and on *a level accessible to its specific target audience, which are not facilitated only by academics and communication scholars and practitioners, but rather* ***by ordinary citizens in a variety of social contexts*** (see Chapter 2.4 and 2.5).

The rationale that mainly mass communication and media studies students and media professionals in the media industry should be the primary stakeholders and role-players to become equipped with fundamental knowledge, critical understanding and insight relating to the mass media, is no longer sustainable. Increasingly more educators recognize the growing significance and value of teaching about the mass media, while parents and social institutions such as churches, schools, etc. share in a growing interest and often (rightly or wrongly) concern for the ever-growing presence, role and effects of the mass media in society (Buckingham 2000; Landay 1995:19; *The*

New Citizen, published by Citizens for Media Literacy 1995). Downs (2000) refers to comprehensive media education being "the most exciting trend in school reform today ... where our culture and society are profoundly integrated with and shaped by mediated messages".

This realization that studying the media is no longer the prerogative of media practitioners and academics specializing in communication related disciplines, has enhanced the development of media literacy as a field of study. Ewen (2000: 448) debates the significance of "the development of tools for critically analyzing images ... for ordinary citizens" in a society where "instrumental images are employed to petition our affections at every turn" and goes even further to say that this should be done by means of educational curricula for all people. "The aesthetic realm — and the enigmatic ties linking aesthetic, social, economic, political and ethical values — must be brought down to earth as a subject of study".

Silverblatt et al. (2002) report that media literacy as an educational standard has become a compulsory part of the general academic development of university students in all fifty states in the USA, while 61 other institutions of higher education are already offering formal media literacy coursework as part of their curricula. This matter of media literacy is deemed as so important, that the *Journal of Communication* devoted a specific issue to the subject in 1998. But while the earlier-mentioned First World countries have the advantage of media literacy being an integrated curriculum in many educational institutions (also on school level), little evidence is to be found in South Africa about formal incorporation of this vital life-skill in the current Age of Information.

1.2 Identification of the research problem

Popper (1996) maintains that "knowledge does not start from perceptions or observations or the collection of data or facts; it starts, rather, from problems. One might say: no knowledge without problems; but also no problems without knowledge". A research problem can be described as "some difficulty which the researcher experiences in the context of either a theoretical or practical situation and to which he or she wants to obtain a solution" (Welman & Kruger 1999: 13). These same authors also identify practical problems, previous research or existing theories as sources of

research problems (Welman & Kruger 1999: 15). Against this background, this thesis focuses on the finding of a solution to both a practical and theoretical problem related to the teaching of media literacy as a distinctive and unique field of study.

Media literacy as a subject or module, and even as a choice of study in terms of degree/program options, is currently taught at school and university levels in most developed countries such as Canada, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Belgium, Holland, Sweden, Japan, Finland and Hawaii. In most of these countries' educational systems, it features as an independent subject or module, particularly at primary and secondary school levels (further discussed in Chapter 3.4 and 3.5). Those First World countries which have already integrated media literacy in various education frameworks (*inter alia* in school and tertiary curricula, citizen bureaux and societal institutions such as libraries, reading circles, youth scouts and grass-roots movements, and churches) have done pioneering work in their attempts to delineate and establish media literacy as an independent and distinctive field of study.

However, as has already been stated, media literacy as a specific and unique learning area seems to be rare in the South Africa educational context. It appears that the use of the mass media is at times incorporated into other learning areas at primary and secondary school level (i.e. languages, science, mathematics, drama, art and economics) in order to assist learners in accessing that particular field of study.

Nevertheless, enquiries made at various educational institutions on school level throughout the country to identify instances where media literacy functions as *a distinctive subject or module*, proved to be fruitless. Likewise, no examples of media literacy as a distinctive subject, module or degree program aimed specifically at empowering ordinary media users and students — other than in communication and media studies — with critical awareness (as is the case in many First World countries) could be found at tertiary institutions in South Africa. Consequently, the assumption can be made that media literacy as a distinctive learning area in the form of a subject, module or degree program is either non-existent or enjoys a very low profile in South Africa (cf. Chapter 3.6).

This situation is undesirable given the fact that South Africa most probably has one of the most sophisticated mass media industries on the African continent, operating in a predominantly democratic context where values such as freedom of expression, public criticism, social responsibility, individual freedom and the empowerment of the masses (in order to access a free market of ideas), are embedded. However, it could be argued that educators presenting media-related studies on tertiary level, view media literacy more as an outcome and not as a specific and unique field of study.

The importance and need for teaching media literacy, also in a South African context, has already been established and motivated, but *how* to do it and which knowledge contents and analytical skills it should incorporate by means of which teaching techniques, remain critical questions. The literature study revealed that educators in First World countries currently use and have been experimenting with varied and diverse practical approaches to the teaching of this learning area.

Yet, the majority of points of departure in these teaching approaches are mainly issue- or dilemma-driven. A theoretical framework or model to guide the teaching content and process seems to be absent. As a result, ground-breaking work done on media literacy teaching in these countries is unfortunately characterized by conceptual fragmentation and a vast array of overlapping and sometimes conflicting educational approaches, leading to even more confusion than clarity on the nature, scope and aims of media literacy, as well as acceptable and ideal teaching approaches and methods applicable to this learning area (see Chapter 4). This situation is most probably caused by the fact that media literacy is still a relatively young and developing field of study, even in the earlier-mentioned First World countries.

Only one conceptualized model for guiding media literacy teaching was found in the course of the literature review, titled the T.A.P model, developed by Eddie Dick (undated) from the Scottish Film Council (undated, accessed September 2002, see Chapter 4.8.7 for presentation of model). While Shepherd (1992) labels this model and approach as the "perfect curriculum" for elementary education, it clearly demonstrates the divide between First World media knowledge under citizens, particularly scholars, compared to those in South Africa.

If indeed "the media are a broad, amorphous field, extending not just from traditional media such as newspapers and magazines to television and film, but also now encompassing many areas of popular culture such as fashion, toys and dolls, the nature of celebrity, etc", this conceptual framework of Dick embraces a variety of complex and interrelated factors, while many of the terms used in the model may seem unfamiliar even to teachers on any level in South Africa. (While only this one model was encountered, it is not consequently suggested that there *are* no other existing models in the expansive body of knowledge on media literacy in addition to the many suggestions of teaching methods and formulas.)

Shepherd (1992) says indeed that a number of such teaching methods or frameworks have been developed in various parts of the world in the last few years during which media education has moved forward in many parts of the world. Most of these techniques express the same components, functions and process in different ways, and eventually "it is having a framework that is important, not necessarily *this* specific framework", meaning that Dick's model or framework is not the only option to be used, says Shepherd. This specified model of Dick may, however, be applicable to tertiary education of media studies learners who need an in-depth understanding of mass communication and the mass media. The fact remains that this model of Dick, and adapted and labeled by Shepherd as the "ideal curriculum" for the teaching of media literacy, is quite an advanced model of media education for a society of already established and skilled media consumers who have had long periods of exposure to the mass media. It is not advised for use by ordinary media consumers and citizens who are not familiar with the applicable mass media terminology in the model, specifically in a country such as South Africa.

Against this background the research problem of this thesis is formulated as follows:

> **Within the South African context, there currently exists no functional model to guide the process and contents of media literacy teaching on a tertiary level.**

Various practical considerations motivated the connection of this research problem to a tertiary level. The development of a media literacy culture in South Africa is a long

term venture and obviously requires a new generation of media literacy teaching facilitators — where the focus is not only on communication students *per se*, but also students from diverse academic backgrounds like education, social work, theology, psychology, occupational therapy etc., who might later find themselves in environments where the formal or informal teaching of media literacy to ordinary media users (minors and adults) is potentially viable and feasible. An emphasis on the inception of media literacy on a school level will be inappropriate in the absence of such a new generation of facilitators. It is nonetheless argued that the initial effect of sensitizing students as potential facilitators on tertiary level will in due course filter through to other relevant societal structures and levels.

In an attempt to address this research problem, and due to sparse literature on the teaching of media literacy in a South African context, the researcher inevitably has had to rely on and make use of a body of knowledge and experiences originating from First World countries. Note must be taken that the social, economic and political media contexts of South Africa may differ from those of the earlier-mentioned First World countries in which the pioneering work on media literacy has been done.

It is further assumed that the media environment in South Africa, being a developing country, is characterized by:

- a more confined media industry dominated by a smaller number of large media monopolies and various smaller media groups ;
- less specialization in media formats and genres ;
- socio-economic factors and geographic isolation limiting many receivers' access and exposure to the mass media ;
- a complex multi-cultural profile of potential mass media audiences ;
- widespread illiteracy hampering even a fundamental measure of decoding of mass media messages and content; and
- urbanization, poverty and various social needs affecting the context of mass communication.

However, it is also assumed in this thesis that there are inevitable similarities between the mass media context of South Africa and that of First World countries when it comes to fundamental aspects, such as the role, functions, operational dynamics, effects, receiver experience and environment of the mass media. Mass media globalization, resulting in the import and extensive use of overseas media content from First World countries, is also a characteristic of the local media environment (Biagi 2003: 364; Eko 2001: 25 – 40; Fourie 2001a) — particularly in view of the costs involved in television and film production.

Therefore the assumption can likewise be made that literature and experiences related to media literacy in the First World can also be relevant to a South African context. Nevertheless, the researcher will attempt to remain sensitive to contextual differences in addressing the mentioned research problem, particularly with a view to the more sophisticated level of media consumers in other developed countries.

In concluding this sub-section on the identification of the research problem, cognizance should also be taken of the following factors that may influence the selection of a research problem:

- relevancy;
- researchability;
- feasibility; and
- ethical acceptability.

The relevancy of the research problem has already been indicated, while an attempt will be made to demonstrate the researchability, feasibility and ethical acceptability of the research problem in the rest of this chapter and the chapters to follow.

1.3 Formulation of research questions

Leedy and Ormrod (2001: 5) are of the opinion that "the world is filled with unanswered questions and unresolved problems ...[a]nd by asking questions, we strike the first spark igniting a chain reaction that terminates in the research process". In a quantitative research process, hypotheses are often used as points of departure to

address a research problem, while in qualitative research the emphasis is more on the formulation of research questions especially in cases where theory is insufficiently developed to provide well-defined hypotheses (Dooley 18984: 274; Leedy & Ormrod 2001:60). As is described later in this chapter, this thesis will follow the qualitative paradigm in an attempt to address the identified research problem and as a result research questions (and not hypotheses) will be formulated "to direct one's thinking toward the solution of the research problem" (Leedy & Ormrod 2001: 60) or "as a way of focussing the research problem" (Mouton 2001: 53).

In the process of developing research questions, Babbie and Mouton (2001: 84) also maintain that a researcher has to determine whether a study is empirical or non-empirical before research questions can be formulated. According to characteristics provided by Mouton (2001: 52) this study can be categorized as a *non-empirical study*, since the emphasis here is on reviewing an existing body of knowledge; identifying trends in scientific literature; analyzing concepts; constructing of theories and models, etc. (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 84 – 85).

Mouton (2001: 54-55) identifies four types of non-empirical research questions related to non-empirical studies. When linked to this study, the following research questions are formulated:

- **Conceptual research question:** What is meant with the term "media literacy", both as a concept and field of study?
- **Meta-analytic research question:** What is the current state of affairs regarding media literacy as a teaching phenomenon?
- **Theoretical research question:** What are the most plausible theories on teaching media literacy?
- **Normative research question:** What can be proposed as an ideal model for teaching media literacy on a tertiary level in a South African context?

Although each of these four research questions has its own distinctive focus, they are also closely related and in actual fact inseparable. The conceptual, meta-analytical,

and theoretical questions constitute *the secondary* research questions of the study, while the normative question forms the *primary* research question, due to its direct relationship with the identified research problem. However, in answering the primary research question ("What can be proposed as an ideal model for teaching media literacy on a tertiary level in a South African context?"), it is imperative to first answer the stated secondary research questions that will form the foundation for and a logical build-up towards the answering of the primary research question.

1.4 Purpose, goal and objectives of the study

Babbie (1994: 90 – 92; see also Babbie & Mouton 2001: 79 – 81) identifies three basic purposes of social research in general:

- exploration (to explore a topic or provide a basic familiarity with a topic);
- description (to describe a situation, event or process); and
- explanation (to indicate causality between variables or events).

It is argued that the focus of this study is mainly centered on the first two options, with special emphasis on the explorative dimension. It is further assumed in this thesis that the goal and objectives of any study of this kind should be directed towards one thing only: the answering of the stated research questions in order to address the identified research problem. Therefore the goal and objectives of this thesis are directly related to answering the primary and secondary research questions mentioned in the previous sub-section (see 1.3).

Against this background, the goal of the study can be formulated:

> **To explore and describe the development of what can be proposed as an ideal model for teaching media literacy on a tertiary level within a South African context (constituting the answer to the primary and normative research question).**

The objectives of the thesis are, in turn, related to the answering of the earlier-mentioned secondary research questions and can be formulated as follows:

- **to explore and describe the term media literacy, both as a concept and field of study (answering the conceptual research question);**
- **to explore and describe the state of affairs regarding media literacy as a teaching phenomenon (answering the meta-analytical research question); and**
- **to explore and describe the most plausible theories on the teaching of media literacy (answering the theoretical research question).**

1.5 Implementing the qualitative research paradigm

Although the terms quantitative and qualitative research are commonly used, the exact meaning of these terms and the distinction between these two research approaches are not always clear and formally delineated. Some theorists argue for example that a "typical" quantitative study may also include qualitative elements when the researcher interprets and generalizes his or her findings (Mouton & Marais 1989:157). On the other hand, a typical "qualitative" study may in turn also include quantitative notions simply when the words "more" or "less" are used in its findings (Mouton & Marais 1989: 157).

In addition, many so-called qualitative researchers actually resist a set definition and description of qualitative research for fear of limiting the techniques of the research, and therefore it seems to be often accepted that the word *qualitative* rather refers to a broad philosophy and approach to social sciences research (Wimmer & Dominick 2000: 106), but Strauss and Corbin (1998: 59) acknowledge that qualitative research involves a "radically different way of thinking about data". Struwig and Stead confirm this by saying that qualitative research "is not easily defined and can mean many things" (2001: 11), while Neuman (2000: 147) sees qualitative researchers as "bricoleurs", who learn to be adept at doing many things, drawing on a variety of sources and making do with whatever is at hand, being pragmatic in an inventive manner to accomplish a specific task. An in-depth discussion of this terminological dilemma and philosophical and methodological groundings of what is labeled

quantitative or qualitative research, however, falls outside the scope of this thesis. Therefore, the simple description of Dooley (1984: 267), stating that qualitative research is characterized by the "nonstatistical" analyses of observations or data, is used here as a point of departure.

The motivation for following a qualitative research approach in the thesis is based on statements by Bless and Higson-Smith (2000: 37), Creswell (1998: 94), Du Plooy (2001:83), Garbers (1996: 291), Maykut and Morehouse (1994: 43 – 47), Neuman (2000: 147), and Wimmer and Dominick (2000: 43 – 44), and indicative that such an approach would be preferable and is indicated in studies focusing on:

- exploration and description;
- developing new theories;
- developing new and/or refining existing models;
- increasing the depth of understanding of a phenomenon; and
- pursuing new areas of interest.

The above aspects are characteristic of the focus of this particular study. Further to the point, Leedy and Ormrod (2001: 148) identify several general purposes of qualitative research, namely:

- *Description*: Revealing the nature of certain phenomena, processes, situations and systems;
- *Interpretation*: Gaining insight in the nature of particular phenomena, develop new concepts, theoretical perspectives or models and discover problems that exist within the phenomenon itself;
- *Evaluation*: Provide a means through which a researcher can judge the effectiveness of particular policies, practices and/or innovations; and
- *Verification*: Allowing the researcher to test the validity of certain assumptions, claims, theories or generalization within the real-world context.

The goal and objectives of this study have direct links with what Leedy and Omrod (2001: 48) label as *description* and *interpretation*. Evaluation is likewise relevant in this study, due to the fact that in the process of proposing a plausible model for media literacy teaching, implicit and explicit evaluations and inferences will be made about existing teaching practices in other countries. Verification will also be relevant to the extent that the researcher's practical experiences of teaching media literacy in "a real world context" will inevitably play some role in validating certain assumptions, claims and generalizations related to teaching media literacy. Against this background, it is argued that the qualitative research approach is the feasible approach to be followed in this study.

While working in the qualitative paradigm in this study, it is, however, necessary to take note of some of the characteristics of qualitative research that might have an effect on how the research is conducted in this thesis. One of the most important interpretational limits of qualitative research is the allegation that the researcher often comes "too close to the study" resulting in "a loss of objectivity" and "the necessary professional detachment" (Wimmer & Dominick 2000: 44, 85).

Conversely, some theorists on qualitative research do not necessarily view this in a negative light, since the notion of "an objective reality" existing independently of the beliefs and orientations of the researcher, is rejected (Watt & Van den Berg 1995: 412). Within this approach, a researcher can never be an uninvolved and objective entity, and the "human-as-instrument" principle (Maykut & Morehouse 1994: 43 – 47) is also applied to the researcher, making him or her a primary research instrument of sorts. Therefore, it is acknowledged that the personal perspectives of the researcher in this study can inevitably cause alleged interpretational limits, as the next researcher may interpret the findings in a different light.

Given the exploratory and descriptive nature of this study, the researcher will nevertheless attempt to remain aware of this limitation, especially when it comes to the relatively subjective activity of identifying important variables. These variables could influence the process and content of media literacy teaching, and structuring them systematically into what seems to be logical and successive steps that will form the

basis of the proposed model, is a vital step. Since the researcher has two years experience in teaching media literacy as a self-sufficient module on tertiary level at the University of the Free State, care will also be taken not to allow practical experience to override scientific inquest. However, not to incorporate this valuable experience in a study of this kind, will not be true to the nature of qualitative research.

Qualitative researchers also believe that there are multiple perspectives held by different individuals, while all of these perspective have equal validity or truth (cf. Cresswell 1998). This view is applicable indeed to the concept of media literacy, as it became clear that there are literally dozens of views and perspectives on this field of study, and that all of these perspectives are valid.

Davis (1997) summarizes it well by stating that human experience is of primary importance, and in-depth reports by those having the experience are the best source of understanding. Experiences cannot be removed from their contexts. Qualitative research seeks to identify the deeper structure and common elements in experiences, while valuing the uniqueness of each person's experience. Consequently, the model to be developed in this thesis remains a **proposed ideal** for teaching media literacy based on the insight and views, as well as the context experienced by the researcher. It is not regarded as an ultimate, universal or necessarily flawless model. It is regarded by the researcher as normative only in the sense that it is assumed that it could at least provide a point of departure for local media literacy teaching.

There can furthermore be a noticeable difference in terms of the style of the reporting of the findings of a quantitative and qualitative study. Dooley (1884: 270) explains: "The most obvious difference between quantitative and qualitative research can be seen in the notational system used to report findings. Numbers, figures, and inferential statistics appear in the results sections of quantitative studies. In contrast, qualitative research typically reads like a story written in everyday language."

In qualitative research, the findings are mainly communicated by words, narrative and individual quotes, and in a personal voice — often employing the terms of *I* and *we* — and a literary style (Leedy & Ormrod 2001: 102; Struwig & Stead 2001:220). Although

this study takes place within certain academic parameters, certain aspects of the study may reveal a more personal narrative style incorporating the extensive use of quotes and examples from popular culture — a style perhaps less conventional in places than the usual academic text. This possible difference in style, however, should be seen and evaluated against the above background.

1.6 Research design

Some theorists feel uneasy to explicitly link qualitative studies, especially when focusing on the development of new theories and models (labeled as "theoretical creative research") to specific designs, since such research often "is much less structured and cannot always be preplanned" (Goddard & Melville 2001: 8). However, in this the thesis research design is not viewed as a factor restricting the theoretical creativity of the researcher, but rather as a means to direct it.

Mouton and Marais (1989: 33) maintain that the goal of a research design is to plan the research project and to provide it with a specific structure in order to guide the research process and enhance the validity of the research findings. The research design of any study refers to a carefully thought-out strategy or "a complete strategy of attack on the central research problem" (Leedy & Ormrod 2001: 91). The research design thus addresses the planning of the scientific inquiry and strategy for "attempting to finding out something" — how the researcher thus intends to conduct the research (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 74). Mouton (2001: 56) insists that it is imperative to keep the distinction between research design and research methodology in mind. This author compares a research design to a plan drawn up by an architect to direct the building of a structure. According to this analogy, the research design is the blueprint or plan (structural framework) formulated to address the research problems and questions, while research methodology refers to the actual process of implementation of the plan or blueprint, where the emphasis is mainly on the process of data collection and analysis. This often results in interdisciplinary, multi-paradigmatic and multi-method research characteristics (Struwig & Stead 2001: 11).

Leedy and Ormrod (2001: 149), Mouton (2001: 57) as well as Struwig and Stead (2001:11), identify the following research designs which could be used in a qualitative study. It should be noted that some of these, i.e. the content analysis for example, can also be used in a quantitative study, depending on the researcher's approach to answering the stated research question/s:

- literature reviews;
- conceptual analysis;
- philosophical analysis;
- archival source analysis;
- case studies;
- ethnographic studies;
- phenomenological studies;
- Grounded Theory studies,
- content analysis;
- participatory action/observation studies;
- evaluation research;
- unobtrusive research;
- symbolic interactionism and postmodernism;
- theory building, and
- historical research.

Bowers and Courtright (1984: 31) remark that contemporary communication research often employs *mixed research designs* — where two or even more research design options are combined and necessary to address a specific research problem and answer research questions adequately, which also increases validity. In choosing an applicable research design, Babbie and Mouton (2001: 103) are of the opinion that the following question should be asked: "What type of study will you conduct to address the research problem as you have formulated it? What kind of design will produce the evidence or data that you need to answer your research questions?"

It is assumed in this thesis that the research problem and questions will best be addressed by employing a mixed research design incorporating aspects of the literature review, content analysis, conceptual analysis and Grounded Theory research

design options. While the information and findings flowing from the implementation of each design option will be integrated in this thesis, certain design options are more accentuated than others in addressing specific research questions. The questions with the selected methodologies of research can be illustrated as follows (in Table 1.1, compare also Chapter 6, Table 6.1).

Table 1.1: Research questions and selected design/methodologies of research

Number of research question/ objective	Research questions	Chapter devoted to research question and methodology	Design
1.	What is meant with the term media literacy teaching, both as concept and process?	Chapter 2	Qualitative literature review and content analysis
2.	What is the current state of affairs with regard to media literacy as a teaching phenomenon?	Chapter 3	Qualitative literature review
3.	What are the most plausible theories and techniques of media literacy teaching?	Chapter 4	Qualitative literature review and conceptual analysis
4.	What can be regarded as the ideal model for the teaching of media literacy?	Chapter 5	Qualitative literature review, content analysis and Grounded Theory

For example, in addressing the *conceptual research question* (What is meant with the term media literacy, both as a concept and academic field of study?), a qualitative literature review and content analysis are indicated as preferable methods. Searching for answers to the *meta-analytic research question* (What is the current state of affairs regarding media literacy as a teaching phenomenon, both internationally and in South Africa?) and *normative research question* (What is the ideal manner in which media literacy should be taught?), may rather indicate the use of a literature review. To answer the third research question (What is the ideal manner in which media literacy should be taught?) both a literature review followed by conceptual analysis are needed to address this question. In an effort to firstly identify, and then structure the current teaching approaches and techniques for media literacy education, in order to attain conceptual clarity and theoretical linkages. In addressing *the primary and normative research*

question (What can be proposed as the most plausible functional model for teaching media literacy on a tertiary level in a South African context?), the Grounded Theory design will be used, based on the information and findings provided by the literature review, and content and conceptual analysis in answering the secondary research questions already mentioned.

An important characteristic of qualitative research remains the fact that data collection and analysis begins early and transpires continuously in the research process, and advances throughout the project (Wimmer & Dominick 2000: 106). In this specific study, the dynamics and implementation of the mixed research designs are already evident from Chapter Two onwards, and therefore a discussion of the characteristics of each design employed in this study in a later stage or chapter is senseless. Consequently, these issues have to be addressed in the introductory chapter. The general characteristics of each selected design option will receive brief attention, while the unique data collection and data analysis methods related to each design option will be discussed in the following sub-section (1.6.3 Research Methodology).

1.6.1 Literature review: nature and characteristics

Mouton (2001:179-180) describes a literature review as follows: "Here you read a 'sample' of texts in order to come to an understanding of a specific domain of scholarship. The selection of sources is driven by the theoretical considerations, such as, the aim of the study, the research questions, as well as pragmatic considerations (time-frame, level of study)". Wimmer and Dominick (2000: 27) add to this statement by saying that researchers never begin a research project without first consulting existing literature to learn "what was done, how it was done and what results were obtained" by "tracing, identifying and analyzing documents containing information relating to the research problem" (Struwig & Stead 2001: 38). This allows the researcher not only to learn from past research, but also to add to it.

Typical questions are being asked during the literature review: what type of research has already been done in the area, what has been found in previous studies, what has not been investigated, what was done with the results gained in previous studies, and

how can the proposed study add to new knowledge of the area? These examples can easily apply to this study, where the same types of questions surfaced during the initial reading phase (Du Plooy 2001: 61; Wimmer & Dominick 2000: 27). Du Plooy (2001: 60) lastly says that a review of literature refers to a systematic and thorough survey of publications that are relevant to the research project in order to determine their strengths and weaknesses, thus positioning the researcher as a critical reader.

Babbie and Mouton (2001: 384) identify the following purposes of a literature review:

- to sharpen and deepen the theoretical framework of the research, and to study the different theories related to the topic for an interdisciplinary perspective;
- to familiarize the researcher with the latest developments in the subject of research, and to provide a basic body of knowledge for the derivation of theories, principles, concepts and approaches;
- to identify gaps in knowledge as well as existing study weaknesses, i.e. what has been already done, and what is yet to be studied or improved;
- to discover connections, contradictions and/or other relations between different research results by comparing various theories and studies; and to consequently stimulate new ideas and approaches (Struwig & Stead 2001:39);
- to identify variables that must be considered in the research, emerging as a result of comparison;
- to study the definitions used in previous works as well as characteristics of previous studies and populations, with the aim of adopting them for new research or contexts; and
- to study the advantages and disadvantages of research methods used by others in order to adopt or improve on them in the current research (Bless & Higson-Smith 2000: 20).

The weaknesses or shortcomings of literature reviews are mainly potential selectivity in selecting sources, the misunderstanding of sources, and selective interpretation to suit

one's own viewpoints (Mouton 2001:180). Du Plooy (2001:62) also warns researchers to avoid defining the study too rigidly or too narrowly in order to avoid the potential blocking of valuable information. This can be prevented, however, if the researcher takes care to include as many differing viewpoints and approaches to the problem as possible.

1.6.2 Content analysis: nature and characteristics

Modern content analysis had its beginnings in World War II, when the Allied Intelligence Units wanted to monitor the types and numbers of popular songs being played by the enemy in order to determine their mobilization movements and the morale of their soldiers. Since then, content analysis became a widely used research design, particularly in the communication environment. Content analysis in general is often applied to catalogue the attributes of a given subject in order to obtain a summative view of the phenomenon, classifying content analysis as a method of descriptive research. During this process, the dominant message and theme of the related subject are systematically documented in order to determine whether these items introduce definite and specific criteria, trends or patterns (Wimmer & Dominick 2000: 138).

Kerlinger (1986 in Wimmer & Dominick 2000: 135) describes it as a method to study and analyze communication or messages in a "systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purposes of variable measurement" and is particularly effective to measure and study societal and community changes and shifts, such as the phenomenon of the mass media and media literacy. The methodology has its roots in the logistic-positivistic methodology and tradition, and is focused on hypothetical testing and generalizations for points of departure.

The use of content analysis as a research method in order to supply points of departure for discussion or new research (as in this thesis *inter alia*), is a relatively new development, also sometimes known as *cultivation anal*ysis (Wimmer & Dominick 2000: 138). It is important to keep in mind that content analysis cannot be applied as the sole basis for final judgements and conclusions, but that it rather can be

summarized as any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specific characteristics of messages (Holsti 1968). Cassell and Symon (1994: 26) instructed that singular isolated units — words, phrases or themes — be indexed and categorized.

Media researcher Fiske (1982: 119) maintains that content analysis was originally designed and developed to produce objective, measurable, verifiable interpretations of the manifest content of messages in and about the media, with a view to supply indications of denotative meaning. The fact that it is most effective when dealing with large volumes of text (Fiske 1982: 120), made the experience of dealing with the body of abundant existing media literacy statements and descriptions manageable.

Berelson (in Krippendorff 1980: 34) developed a classification of purposes of content analysis, and amongst these, the following apply to the current process of research into media literacy:

- revealing the focus of attention of any individual, group, institution or society;
- description of trends;
- revealing national and international differences in communication content — and in this case, differences between various "schools" of thinking about, and approaches of media literacy;
- comparing different media or levels of media communication; and
- auditing communication content as opposed to goals and purposes.

Fiske (1982:120), Holsti (1969:608) and Kerlinger (1986 in Wimmer & Dominick 2000: 135) identify the following strengths of content analysis, *inter alia* that the method:

- can handle expansive quantities of text in a systematic manner;
- is non-reactive, which prevent errors associated with the interaction between researchers and subjects;
- deals in a relatively simple manner with unstructured material and content;
- provide generalizations for points of departure in the formulation theories or models; and

- is replicable and provide verifiable interpretations.

Mouton (2001: 166) lastly warns against the limitations in terms of the authenticity of the data sources as well as the representational character of texts, which can limit the overall external validity of the findings if care is not taken. In this study, the process of content analysis will be applied to the substantial amount of literature on the media literacy concept in order to arrive at an unambiguous answer about what it is, what it aims to achieve and why, and to establish which people should be involved in the process of learning (Chapters 2 and 5.2.2).

1.6.3 Conceptual analysis: nature and characteristics

The process of non-empirical conceptual analysis, originating from various theoretical and philosophical traditions, can be applied when the researcher needs to focus on the meaning of concepts through processes of clarification and categorisation (Mouton 2001: 175). While some scholars see conceptual analysis as a type of content analysis (University of Colorado 1997), the other type being relational analysis, Carley (1992) says that conceptual analysis begin with identifying research questions and choosing a sample or samples, during which the process of coding is basically a process of selective reduction. According to Jackson (2000: 33), the goal of conceptual analysis is to elucidate some of the "philosophically important concepts that ordinary folk use ... the situations covered by the *words* we use to ask our questions concerning knowledge ... [while] the inquiry involves consulting intuitions about possible cases". This reflects a typical qualitative angle.

The main reward and strength of this design is that it can bring about conceptual clarity, and that the structured concepts aid in the classification of the elements of reality and generalisation (Harman 1997). For concepts to be useful however, they should be defined in "clear, precise, non-ambiguous methods" (Bless & Higson-Smith 2000: 31).

Important criteria for conceptual defining and analysis in order to avoid conceptual perplexity, theoretical ambiguities and fallacious reasoning (cf. Mouton 2001) *are inter alia:*

- The conceptual definition or category must denote the distinctive characteristics and nature of that which is selected;
- The definitions or categories should not be circular and ambiguous;
- The definitions or categories should be stated positively; and
- The conceptual definitions or categories should be stated in clear and unequivocal terms to avoid differing interpretations (Bless & Higson-Smith 2000).

Carley (cf. 1992) specifies the following steps when conducting conceptual analysis:

- Decide on the level of analysis;
- Decide how many concepts or categories to code for;
- Decide whether to code for existence of frequencies of concepts;
- Decide on a basis to distinguish among different concepts;
- Develop rules for coding the test;
- Decide what will be done with so-called "irrelevant" information;
- Code the texts; and
- Analyze and discuss results and findings.

While the media literacy domain is rife with a diversity of academically-founded as well as unscientific and popular approaches to the teaching of the subject, it became necessary in the process of exploration to draw certain conceptual categories, and in order to reveal the conceptual implications of different viewpoints. It should be emphasized that no existing matrix or framework, in which different teaching approaches and techniques are categorised and structured, could be found in current literature, which may also contribute to the debates which reflect on a fragmentation of the media literacy field of study. Therefore it will be endeavoured (in Chapter 4) to confine the body of teaching approaches and pedagogical perspectives on media literacy by means of the above steps in the process of conceptual analysis (see also Chapter 4.3).

1.6.4 Grounded Theory: nature and characteristics

Strauss and Corbin (1990: 23) circumscribe this invention — Grounded Theory — as "one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represent ... it is

discovered, developed and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon ... one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge". Mouton (2001: 176) accentuates that science cannot make progress without theories and models by means of which social scientists attempt to explain phenomena in the real world. While "a theory is a set of statements that makes explanatory or causal claims about reality, a model is a set of statements that aims to represent a phenomenon or set of phenomena as accurately as possible. Good theories and models ... simplify our understanding of the world".

Co-developer of Grounded Theory, Anselm Strauss, describes the method as designed specifically for generating and testing theory on any given subject or phenomenon (1987: xi) and is specifically defined as "a better understanding of social phenomena through a particular style of qualitative analysis of data" (1987: xi), also called "microscopic analysis" in order to generate initial categories and to suggest relationships among these categories (Strauss & Corbin 1998: 5). Strauss amplifies by saying that:

> [T]he methodological thrust of the Grounded Theory approach to qualitative data is toward the development of theory, without any particular commitment to specific kinds of data lines of research on theoretical interests ... it is a style of doing qualitative analysis that includes a number of distinct features, such as theoretical sampling and certain methodological guidelines, such as the making of constant comparisons and the use of a coding paradigm to ensure conceptual development and density (1998: 5).

Neuman (2000: 146) confirms this by saying that it is a widely used approach in qualitative research that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived theory about a phenomenon with the purpose to build a theory that is faithful to "micro-level evidence".

Grounded Theory, mainly being a product of academic scholarship in the 1980s and 1990s, is therefore increasingly used in qualitative research in order to create or develop theories and models or "to build theory from making comparisons in the critical context" (Neuman 2000: 147). As the name indicates, data is collected to form the

basis or "ground" for the development of a model (Leedy & Ormrod 2001: 154; Monsen 1992:7; Neuman 2000: 145), whereafter such a theory or model can be supported or refuted, based on further data collection and analysis (Du Plooy 2001: 32). Although interviews are often regarded as an important source of data collection in accordance with the Grounded Theory approach, Leedy and Omrod (2001: 154) emphasize that anything else of "potential relevance to the research question" may also be used, for example, observations, documents and historical records and, as is the case in this study, a literature review, content and conceptual analysis.

Maykut and Morehouse (1994: 122) note that Grounded Theory "... is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents", and conclude that this approach to data analysis (or development of theory) "requires the highest level of interpretation and abstraction from the data in order to arrive at the organizing concepts and tenets of a theory or model to explain the phenomenon of interest". If a researcher is not capable to reveal shortcomings on this required higher level of interpretation or abstraction, it may constitute a weakness in the implementation of a Ground Theory approach to research. In addition, Du Plooy (2001: 32) also emphasizes that this form of qualitative research rests heavily on inductive reasoning, questioning or observing, and progressing to formulating propositions. As a result, theory and models are "developed in intimate relationship with data, with researchers fully aware of themselves as instruments for developing that grounded theory, whether they generate the data themselves or ground the theoretical work in data collected by others" (Strauss 1987: 6).

The strengths and weaknesses of Grounded Theory are also directly related to the strengths and weaknesses of models in general. A model can be described as "a simplified description or representation of a certain phenomenon which helps one to understand that particular phenomenon" (Graziano & Raulin 2000: 32). The model for the teaching of media literacy to be developed in this study will hopefully share in this characteristic, as well as the other strong points related to most models, namely that models:

- are convenient, manageable and compact representations of the reality;
- can illustrate relationships between parts of the whole;
- can allow for the organization of seemingly random events or actions; and

- generate new or innovative perspectives on existing phenomena (Graziano & Raulin 2000: 34).

However, Mouton (2001: 177) also identifies certain limitations in regard to models and theories. Models are ineffective if they make implausible claims on reality and if they make claims that are vague and not testable, or that are conceptually incoherent, inconsistent, incomplete and confusing.

From the above it is evident that no research design is perfect or complete, and that every design and consequent methodology have both strengths and weaknesses. This is inevitably also true of this study. However, being aware of potential strengths and weaknesses in the design of this study, the researcher will be sensitive to capitalize on strengths, while remaining cautious of pitfalls related to weaknesses and dangers inherent to the described mixed research design (for example, selective interpretation to suit the researcher's own viewpoint, which cannot only have methodological, but also ethical consequences that could hamper the researcher's academic integrity).

1.7 Research methodology

As has already been indicated in the previous sub-section, the term *research methodology* refers to the actual process of implementing the mixed research design in addressing the stated research problem and questions. Strauss and Corbin (1998: 3) define *methodology* as "a way of thinking about and studying social reality", while the *research method* refers to "a set of procedures and techniques for gathering and analyzing data". When discussing the research methodology of this study, the following aspects are regarded as relevant.

1.7.1 Subjects or units of analysis for the study

The subjects or units of analysis refer to the object, phenomenon, entity, process or event the researcher will be investigating (Mouton 2001: 51). In this study the existing body of scientific knowledge on media literacy forms the subject or unit of analysis. This body of knowledge presented itself in the following forms:

- Social artefacts – books, articles in journals, and popular media products – relating directly to the issue of media literacy. Traditional sources such as libraries and journals were scoured for content on media literacy, whilst the Internet and WorldWideWeb produced a veritable host of writings by contemporary individuals, groups and organizations involved with the phenomenon of media literacy.
- Individuals and their theories pertaining to media literacy education, and who have played a prominent role in the development of the media literacy movement in other First World countries, as well as South Africa, were scrutinized, whilst the media literacy list-serv on the Internet was monitored daily for the duration of twelve months;
- Pioneering work done by specific groups and organizations (such as the *Media Awareness Network)*, in the establishment and continuing evolvement of the media literacy movement in First World countries, were analyzed; and
- Various examples of popular media messages were continuously applied in the course of the study in order to verify the necessity for media literacy based on the potential effects of the media.

It needs to be mentioned that the bulk of information on media literacy as a field of study was mainly found on the Internet where many media literacy advocates (individuals), organizations, activist groups and networks operate from. Various e-mail conversations with overseas media literacy role-players contributed to this body of knowledge as the researcher views it, as well as an experiential framework of reference based on the researchers own experiences as a media literacy and media studies lecturer and the experiences, observations and input of students in an individual or group context.

1.7.2 Data collection and analysis

Data are "manifestations of, among other aspects, the reality, a phenomenon, a process or a problem that the researcher is investigating" (Leedy & Ormrod 2001: 78, 94). Against this background, the general term "data" does not only apply to quantitative studies, but can also be used in a qualitative study of this nature. The

mentioned authors furthermore distinguish between primary and secondary data (see also Du Plooy 2001: 59, who distinguishes between primary and secondary *sources*). Primary data, also known as new data, are collected via observations, own experiences, interviews, etc., while secondary data already exist in the form of relevant literature, documents or reports. In this study both primary and secondary data will be used.

A brief overview will now be given of how the researcher intends using the literature review, content and conceptual analysis, and Grounded Theory (being the research design options forming the mixed design approach of this study) in the process of data collection and analysis that form an integral part of the research methodology:

- **Literature review** (see also Chapter 1.6.1)

It is argued that the literature review, being a part of the mixed research design, is best suited in this study to explore the available body of scientific knowledge on media literacy to reveal the nature of this particular phenomenon, and to gain insight into related concepts, theoretical perspectives and teaching approaches of media literacy. The purposes and outcomes of a literature review as stated in 1.6.1 can be applied directly to this current study and has indeed been important steps in the conceptualization and research process pertaining to the phenomenon of media literacy.

Primary and secondary textual literature (see 1.6.1) on media literacy will be examined and studied in order to determine the exact meaning of the concept *media literacy* and to clarify conceptual linkages through classification and categorization of the literature, thus revealing conceptual implications of different approaches and perspectives on media literacy as a study discipline. The reason for inclusion of secondary data, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2001: 95) is that this type of data is layered further away from the primary data, which "are closest to the so-called Truth. Secondary data are not derived from the Truth itself, but from the primary data". In the case of this study the primary data would include studies and research on effects, implications and consequences of the mass media and mass messages, and even that of mass communication.

The study will commence with an examination of textual literature on media literacy by means of

> "... a detailed grounding by systematically and intensively analyzing data, often sentence by sentence, or phrase by phrase of the field note, interview, or other document; by constant comparison, data are extensively collected and coded, using the operations touched on ... thus producing a well-constructed theory. The focus of analysis is not merely on collecting or ordering "a mass of data, but on *organising many ideas* which have merged from analysis of the data" (Strauss 1987: 22).

Many and various categories and constructs emerged during the initial readings and literature review, such as definitions of the process, so-called principles and building-blocks, the rationales behind the need for media literacy teaching, potential approaches and techniques of teaching, benefits and outcomes of the process itself, and prominent organizations and people driving the movement, to mention some.

By means of an extensive literature review, the researcher should be able to acquire a comprehensive understanding and knowledge of the various theories and models which can be adopted for the research, and should furthermore be able to identify the theoretical framework and models [if any] on which the research will/can be based.

- **Content analysis** (see Chapters 1.6.2 and 5.2.2)

Robert Weber (1990: 9) describes the method and process of content analysis as a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text, which can be about the sender(s) of the message, the message itself, or the audience of the message. The rules of this process of inference will vary with the theoretical and substantive interests of the investigator; and the qualitative researcher may look at a sequence of events and pay attention to the issue that evolves or develops, thus detecting process and causal relations (Neuman 2000: 148). From this statement, the suitability to scientifically demarcate the conceptual field of media literacy is clear.

Since the reasons for the inception and growth of media literacy as a discipline on its own will be studied as well as the current standings of the subject, both on an international and national level, the study is furthermore in a large part of an

exploratory nature, especially since the different approaches, practical frameworks and packages of education will also come under scrutiny. Some academics refer to this type of research as evaluative research (Bless & Higson-Smith 2000: 67), and in this particular study the existing data on media literacy, as well as the rationale behind this field of study, were evaluated against the background of numerous individuals' and organizations' contributions to the field. In the qualitative perusal and review of the definitions and perspectives of media literacy, the following broad categories were selected as vital to the development of the proposed model, according to which emerging constructs will be indexed:

- knowledge contents;
- affective qualities;
- conative conditions;
- skills, referring to behavioural capabilities;
- techniques by means of which the above dispositions can be developed;
- the focus and content of media literacy teaching units;
- the reasons/motivation for media literacy teaching;
- the potential consequences and positive outcomes resulting from media literacy education;
- the potential learner who should learn the above knowledge components and skills; and
- stakeholders and role-players who can contribute to the implementation and teaching of a media literacy programme.

- **Conceptual analysis** (see Chapters 1.6.3 and 4.3)

In the exploration and examination of both primary and secondary textual data on the teaching techniques and approaches to media literacy education, two prominent categories are in existence. While the more academically-inclined and scientific methods are encountered in handbooks for media literacy teachers, a wealth of suggestions and formulas exist on the Internet. It is argued that the Internet is a primary platform for advocating media literacy education. While there are generally-agreed upon principles and so-called "building-blocks" for media literacy education in literature, there are also many mutations of prominent frontrunners in the media literacy study field, and a superficial inquiry leaves the researcher with an impression

of "hit-and-run" or "trial-and-error" approaches to this young field of study, where teachers and educators are still following their instincts rather than a planned approach to teaching. It will later also be relayed how many media literacy organisations sell so-called educational packs and syllabi to novices in the field.

Techniques and approaches which crop up repeatedly in literature, whether original or modified in nature, will be selected in order to construct a matrix of the main teaching concepts and categories, i.e. methods focusing on the nature and characteristics of the mass media; techniques aimed at media messages and content to discuss specific issues such as violence and stereotyping; and more advanced formulas for media studies learners. As a result, a matrix (or framework) of chosen approaches and teaching techniques will be constructed.

- **Grounded Theory** (see Chapters 1.6.4 and 5.3.2)

The proposed model in this study (also being a theory for media literacy teaching in South Africa) emerged as a result of the process which Leedy and Ormrod (2001: 155) refer to as the constant comparative method. Accordingly the founding fathers of Grounded Theory, Glaser and Strauss (in Strauss & Corbin 1990), maintain that data analysis during this type of research goes through four phases or procedures of *coding* up to the point of the presentation of the phenomenon under investigation — in this case, the teaching of media literacy. Coding can be defined as specific analytic processes through which data are produced, conceptualized and integrated to form a theory or model (Strauss & Corbin 1998: 3). The coding both follows upon and leads to generative questions, fractures the data to interpretation on a higher level of abstraction, is pivotal for moving toward the discovery of a core category or categories, moves toward ultimate integration of the entire analysis, and lastly yields the desired conceptual density (Strauss & Corbin 1998: 55, 56). These coding phases are:

- **Open coding.**

  The available data on media literacy are scrutinized for commonalities that reflect specific categories or themes within the data. Examples of these would be the definitions and descriptions of the phenomenon of media literacy, the nature and main characteristics thereof, the purposes and aims of the concept and process, the background of the reasons calling for media literacy, the

historical beginnings of the movement, the keyrole-players, advocates and organizations leading the discipline to independent acknowledgement as an academic field of study, different approaches and perspectives on the teaching thereof, identification of the keyrole-players in the quest for media literacy, and envisioned outcomes and results of the teaching of media literacy.

- **Axial coding.**

Interconnections are established among the categories and subcategories mentioned above. During this phase the researcher aims to determine more about each of the stated categories in terms of the context in which it is embedded, the strategies that people use to manage or carry it out, the consequences of these strategies and the conditions that gave rise to the phenomenon. Examples of this type of coding in the specific study focus on the analysis of media content, the critical thinking processes applied by media consumers, the active role of the receiver rather than the passive role, the production skills being developed and resulting from a more critical position towards media content, the developing abilities of individuals and people in society to understand the nature and organization of the mass media, and the knowledge and skills evolving in people as a result of media literacy teaching. Open coding is merely a process of reducing large amounts of data to a small set of themes that appears to describe the phenomenon under investigation.

- **Selective coding.**

After the categories emerging from the axial coding process as described above, the subordinate categories and subcategories become systematically linked with the core issue of media literacy. While some of the links have emerged during the axial coding, the search for these links will now be done "concertedly" (Strauss 1987: 69). Here the categories of media literacy content teaching and education focus on process, for example, and their interrelationships are combined to form a story line which describes "what happens" during the actual process and event of media literacy and the associated teaching. The major themes which were established by scanning all the previous data emerging from the literature on media literacy will be grouped into themes in order to make comparisons and contrasts with reference to definitions and meanings for the concept of media literacy, the outcomes and

benefits, the motivation behind it as well as the pedagogical perspectives on teaching the subject.

- **The development of a theory in the form of a visual model or theory**

The model is offered to explain the phenomenon of media literacy and the teaching thereof. The model will depict the nature of the concept and describe how specific pre-conditions will lead to certain knowledge contents, affective integration and resulting psycho-motor skills and behaviour. The model is thus based entirely on the collected data assembled during the research about the phenomenon of media literacy.

1.7.3 Validity and reliability

While validity is defined by Struwig and Stead (2001: 136) as the extent to which a research design is "scientifically sound and appropriately conducted" (Struwig & Stead 2001: 136), Mouton and Marais (1989: 50-51) distinguish between internal and external validity. Accordingly, a study possesses internal validity when all the data collected in the particular research study and its findings are accurate and reliable. When the findings of a study can be generalized, one can conclude that the study possesses external validity. Instead of validity checks as applied in quantitative research, the qualitative researcher and study will rather be recognized by the use of terms such as credibility, dependability, confirmability, verification and transferability (Leedy & Ormrod 2001: 106). According to these authors, qualitative researchers employ various approaches (like triangulation, extensive time in the field, negative case analysis, thick description, feedback from others, and respondent validation) to support the validity of their findings.

Nevertheless, internal validity is often regarded as problematic or vulnerable in qualitative research. Dooley (1984: 279) argues that the main reason for this is that the "research instrument" in a qualitative study is often an individual without the support of standardized instruments. The observer/researcher intentionally uses his or her feelings, curiosity, hunches, and intuition to explore and understand a certain phenomenon or context. "Consequently, one observer may arrive at results quite different from another or from data collected by a different method" (Dooley 1984: 279).

External validity in qualitative studies likewise poses a problem. However, this problem is not restricted to qualitative research. Dooley (1984: 281) explains: "External validity is difficult to assess in any research. There is no statistical procedure in quantitative research for estimating the confidence we can place on generalizations to other populations, places or times. Thus qualitative research is at no disadvantage in respect to other methodologies."

In an attempt to enhance the internal validity of this study, "rich narrative" (Maykut & Morehouse 1994: 43 – 47) and "thick description" (Leedy & Ormrod 2001: 106) will be used in reporting research outcomes, which will hopefully provide the reader with enough information to understand the context, as well as the arguments, methodologies and process that the researcher have used to come to certain findings and conclusions. With regards to external validity it has already been stated that the model for teaching media literacy is not necessarily for universal application, but can serve as a point of departure which could be adapted to various contexts.

Reliability, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2001) as well as Stead and Struwig (2001: 135), is seen as *consistency*, and can be accomplished by continuous note-taking of observations and constant application of assigned categories to data, while it should also be noted that "reliability is a necessary but insufficient condition for validity" (Leedy & Ormrod 2001:93), and more complex to attain in qualitative research than in quantitative studies. Nonetheless, the researcher will strive to work in a consistent manner.

1.8 The communication perspective on media literacy followed in this study

This study aligns itself with the transactional perspective and view of communication. This perspective was developed by Gerbner in reaction to the first linear models, in which feedback from the receiver or audience (in the case of mass communication) was hardly acknowledged. Gerbner's transactional perspective (in McQuail & Windahl 1993: 8):

> recognizes the substantive interest of the sources and nature of apparent inefficiency [who] stresses the essentially transactional character of much

> communication and the dependence of any meaning which is acquired on the assumptions and foreknowledge of the receiver and on the context in which communication takes place ... having to do with the intersubjectivity of communication, since all communication involves more or less elaborate exchange and bargaining between senders and receivers ... The result of communication is thus a matter of negotiation.

If the communication between the mass communicator by means of the mass media and the audiences or receivers as consumers of the media is seen as a complex transaction in which overlapping messages simultaneously affect and are affected by the other person and multiple factors, the departure from the earliest effect and limited effect-theories immediately become apparent.

The suspicion exists that too many mass media audiences are still passive in their so-called communication with these media and the communicators behind the media, never thinking about what is given to them, particularly in terms of critical thinking applied to these messages and in terms of a deliberate choice of media diet and balance.

This perspective obviously influenced the development of "audience-centred" approaches to mass communication (see 3.2.3). Feedback from the audience/receivers in the case of mass communication is tantamount to them becoming involved in terms of not only the selection of media messages, but also by means of the decoding, analysis, evaluation and even production of the content of the mass media. It does not merely refer to the choices exercised by the consumer, but rather to the degree of critical thinking that he or she applies to all mass media formats and messages — in short, media literacy, which can facilitate a functional relationship with the mass media on the part of the individual consumer and audience members.

1.9 Assumptions of the study

This study follows the basic assumption (to go with the qualitative paradigm rather than hypotheses in a quantitative study) that the phenomenon under investigation — the teaching of media literacy — is:

- "somewhat" lawful and predictable;

- not comprised of completely random events; and
- open to scientific research (Mouton 2001).

The researcher furthermore assumes that the process of media literacy teaching can be analytically structured in logical and successive steps, indicating and ordering various variables that determine the potential effectiveness and success of the process.

Further assumptions made with regard to the study are:

- Media literacy as a field of study is primarily aimed at empowering ordinary people as media users by creating critical awareness when it specifically comes to understanding the role that the media play in their lives; the decoding, interpretation and evaluation of media messages; and the popular culture contexts in which such messages are presented.
- Media literacy as a field of study is and will always be closely related to media studies as an academic discipline since the specific analytical skills and knowledge contents, operationalized in media literacy, stem from media studies.
- Media literacy as a distinctive learning area in the form of a subject, module or degree program, is virtually non-existent, or enjoys a very low profile in South Africa.
- Due to inevitable similarities between the mass media context of South Africa and that of First World countries when it comes to aspects like the role, functions, operational dynamics, effects, receiver experience, etc. of the mass media, as well as the extensive use of overseas media content from First World countries, the assumption is made that literature and experiences related to media literacy in First World countries could also be relevant to a South African context.
- The stated research problem is relevant, researchable, feasible and ethically acceptable.
- The formulated meta-analytical, conceptual, normative and theoretical research questions will direct the answering of the research problem.

- The qualitative paradigm (characterised by the "nonstatistical" analyses of observations or data) is a feasible research approach in addressing the research problem and research questions of this study.
- A mixed research design (incorporating aspects of the literature review, content and conceptual analysis, and Grounded Theory design options) is appropriate in addressing the research problem and research questions of this study.

1.10 Delimitation of the study

Leedy and Ormrod (2001: 61) describes the necessity for delimitation as follows: "We need to know precisely what the researcher intends doing. We also need to know precisely what the researcher does *not* intend doing. What the researcher intends to do is stated in the problem. What the researcher is not going to do is stated in the *delimitation.*" These authors also regard delimitation as the "focal centre" of a study "to distinguish between what is relevant and what is not relevant to the problem" (Leedy & Omrod 2001: 61). Creswell (1998: 110) adds that delimitation "sets the boundaries" of a particular study. Against this background, various delimitations were identified in this study to set the necessary parameters and avoid irrelevant approaches and expectations. Consequently, this study does *not aim to*:

- isolate media literacy from media studies;
- undermine the role, place and value of media studies as a distinctive academic discipline;
- provide a model for teaching media literacy that can be generalized to all educational populations, levels and contexts;
- focus extensively on pedagogical philosophies and theories underlying the teaching process;
- give detailed attention to the process of curriculum design regarding media literacy teaching; or
- provide a complex and theoretical model that will be of little functional use for media literacy teaching facilitators.

1.11 Potential value and contribution of the study and existing research

The need for teaching media literacy, also in a South African context, has already been debated and explained earlier in this chapter. The researcher hopes that this explorative and descriptive study, aimed at developing a functional model for teaching media literacy on a tertiary level, that can be used within a South African context, will not only contribute towards the development of media literacy as a distinctive field of study. It is also hoped, in the longer term, that this model may serve as a educational point of departure that can, in practice, assist in transforming mass media receivers from non-critical consumers to empowered users.

1.12 Exposition of chapters and structuring of thesis

This thesis will contain six chapters. After contextualizing the study in Chapter One, the following four chapters will be structured around the various objectives and research questions formulated in this chapter.

In Chapter Two the term media literacy — both as a concept and field of study — will be explored and described, thus addressing the *conceptual research question*. The chapter commences with a brief background on the historical development of the media literacy movement and references to contemporary research studies in this regard. Media literacy is consequently compared to the larger background of other forms of literacy, as well as the distinctions between media literacy, media studies and media education, media analysis and cultural studies. The motivation behind media literacy are examined, with resulting benefits of media literacy education.

Chapter Three will focus on the current state of affairs of media literacy as a teaching phenomenon. This will necessitate an examination into the appearance of media literacy as a distinctive field of study within the relevant paradigms and larger contexts of communication and the mass media, in order to address the *meta-analytical research question*. The potential implications related to uncontrolled exposure to media content are addressed, and typical issues concerning the effects of the media are debated in brief. The current international state of media literacy as field of study

is put under the searchlight, and prominent international media literacy scholars and groundbreaking organizations are highlighted. The status quo of media literacy as subject in South Africa is lastly put under observation.

The *theoretical research question* is answered by an exploration of the existing techniques of media literacy teaching in Chapter Four, in order to provide points of departure for the prospective media literacy educator. The essence of this chapter is situated in an attempt to review and evaluate the different approaches to the teaching of media literacy by means of conceptual analysis. A substantial number of existing approaches to and frameworks of media education will be evaluated e.g. scaffolding, the so-called three Rs, semiotics, a mythological, a cultural, an ideological and a narrative approach. Each of these brief overviews are concluded with an evaluation of the specific approach/technique, and by means of a process of conceptual analysis these techniques and approaches will be ordered in a matrix.

The subsequent development and proposal of a functional model for teaching media literacy on a tertiary level within a South African context, hence answering of *the normative research question*, receives attention in Chapter Five. This chapter strives to examine the problems of implementation of media literacy and education against the backdrop of this country's numerous problems such as illiteracy, cultural diversity, ignorance about media literacy and inadequate teaching resources. The critical question is whether these obstacles should halt the quest for media literacy. The primary outcome of this chapter is the proposal of a model for learner education in media literacy, consisting of a model for media literacy education both with regard to content and process, providing specific pointers for the teaching of media literacy on tertiary level.

Chapter Six concludes the study. The most important aim in this chapter will firstly be to verify whether the initial goal, objectives and research questions (as set forth in Chapter 1.3) were indeed addressed and answered. Problems which were encountered during the research and ensuing development of the model for tertiary media literacy teaching, are briefly discussed, and are consequently applied to the transactional perspective of communication. The future of media literacy implementation, specifically within the larger context of society, but commencing on

tertiary level, is examined. The essence of this chapter is a critical explication by the researcher, and a conclusion about the potential value of media literacy as an educational process and social and societal process.

1.13 Referencing techniques

The New Harvard referencing method will be applied in this study. The comma after surnames of authors is omitted. Only quotations longer than five printed lines will appear in paragraph form without quotation marks, and is distinguished from the rest of the text by a smaller font size (Stead & Struwig 2001: 182). The use of "I" and "we", while debatable, is typical of qualitative research "and even encouraged", according to Stead and Struwig (2001: 220). According to these same authors (2001: 196), "standards to use the Internet and other online sources in citations are in the process of being developed". The use of Internet resources indeed present some problems with specific reference to dates, and special efforts will be made to determine the exact origin and date of such material.

1.14 Glossary of media literacy terminology

In South Africa the relatively unexplored terrain of media literacy includes specific terminology which may appear unfamiliar to many readers and stakeholders. "Researchers define terms so that readers can understand the context in which the words are being used or their unusual or restricted meaning" (Creswell 1994: 106).

Even in existing literature, it seems as if the terminology surrounding the academic field of media literacy is interchangeable, demanding a sharper focus of the most prominent concepts and phrases (Leedy & Ormrod 2001: 61). However, most of these terms still have much wider meanings than the definitions and meanings suggested here, and this is a personal attempt to define these, often complicated, terms in its simplest form as they are used in the context of this thesis on media literacy. A glossary of media literacy terminology follows immediately after the conclusion in Chapter 6, before the list of references.

Chapter 2

The conceptual research question: exploring the media literacy phenomenon

In this chapter the following aspects will be discussed:

- Establishing a working definition for the concept of media literacy
- A brief history of the development of the media literacy movement
- Media literacy and other manifestations of literacy
- Media literacy and other forms of media-related fields of study
- Motivation for media literacy education
- Benefits and positive outcomes of media literacy education

> A democratic civilization will save itself only if it makes the language of the image into a stimulus for critical reflection, not an invitation to hypnosis (Umberto Eco online], retrieved 21 April 2001).

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the *conceptual research question and objective* of the study — what is meant with the term "media literacy", both as a concept and field of study? — will be approached by means of a scrutiny of the available literature pertaining to the field of study of media literacy, which currently has autonomous standing in mainly First World countries.

In order to explore the phenomenon of media literacy, the following issues — rendering answers to the conceptual research question and thus contributing to an improved conceptual understanding of the phenomenon — will be considered in this chapter:

- establishing a fundamental and working definition for the phenomenon of media literacy (see 2.2);
- a brief exploration into the origins, history and development of the media literacy movement (see 2.3.1 to 2.3.2);
- an exploration of contemporary research with a focus to media literacy (in 2.3.3);
- defining other forms of literacy as opposed to that of media literacy (see 2.4);
- a delineation of the various disciplines of media studies, cultural studies and more specifically popular culture (in 2.5); and
- an exploration of the motivation behind the movement, the aims thereof and the potential benefits of media literacy as a process of learning and education (see 2.6).

The omnipresence of the media has been confirmed by different scholars and academics (cf. Baran & Davis 2003; Biagi 2003; Lowery & DeFleur 1995; Merril, Lee & Friedlander 1990; Philo 1999; Signorielli & Morgan 1990), and it has been said that "it is a truism to say that we live in a world that is saturated with mass media, consumed on a daily basis" (Tolson 1996:ix; see also During 2001). However, it is invariably not

these mass media in itself which are harmful, but rather the manner in which people interact with and "digest" the contents of these mass messages to consequently form perceptions about their lives in the world-at-large, their identities and values, other people and society (see 3.2.3 and 3.2.4).

The dilemma equates with the involvement of receivers and consumers who are passive (according to the earlier views of the consumer as a defenseless receiver of the media's all-powerful reach and content), rather than interacting actively and transactionally with the media messages and content they are exposed to (see 3.2.1 for transactional communication). In an authoritative reader on cultural studies, During (2001:8) argues that the mass media content presents images of the world in which gender, class and ethnic differences are massively downgraded by assuming that the mass audience possess a shared "common sense" based on a practical view of the world. The suspected detrimental and negative consequences of the mass media content (see 3.3 for relevant issues) can potentially be remedied by empowering the audiences and receivers with vital knowledge and skills, pertaining to the mass media industry itself, and which can equip them to navigate and functionally use the media environment (Baran & Davis 2003: 374).

This correlates with the departure from the earlier effect studies to a more participatory perspective of the audience being active, involved and dynamic (cf. Fourie 2001a; Oosthuizen 1996; Severin & Tankard 2001; Tella 1998). The importance of the perspective of the autonomous role of media education is recognized in increasingly more areas of society, economy and science. A growing emphasis on transactional and dialogic communication is put on audiences' interaction with the mass media, where all partakers in the communication process are equally operative in the process of sharing meaning (see 3.2.1 and 3.2.2).

This vision corresponds with the transactional perspective of communication (cf. 3.2.1). As long as media users are, however, not empowered sufficiently to deal with the mass media on equal footing, the latter will always be accused of issues such as exploitation, manipulation, extortion and propaganda (see 3.2.4), while these media, in actual fact, also supply endless volumes of valuable information, education, entertainment and pleasure. Grossberg, Wartella and Whitney (1998:3) say that

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"human beings have always lived in a world of communication, but we live in a world of *media* communication, where we can travel great distances and across centuries, all in the comfort of our own living rooms" — the manifested global village of McLuhan (McLuhan & Zigrone 1995), about which Howard (*The Times* 1992) remarked that the modern mass media have rather produced a wilderness of cave-dwellers. This notion is indicative of the inevitability and specifically the consequences and effects of the mass media (3.2.6 and 3.3).

The above observation presupposes some of the accusations against the mass media: the "less" the user "understands" and is able to decode the message from the mass communicator, the more effectively the purpose of, for example, persuasion by means of advertising can be accomplished by the communicator. If the user cannot optimally decode the mass message as a result of "noise" or interference (see model in 3.2.1), the less "guarded" these users become, and the better the intended purpose, e.g. that of persuasion, is accomplished by the professional and skilled mass media communicator. The value of the message contents must obviously be agreed on by everybody involved in the interaction, in order to accomplish optimal communication and sharing of meaning. However, because of a lack of knowledge and skills on the part of the receiver, communication in the real sense — the sharing of meaning — is seldom accomplished.

Producers of mass media content certainly always have an idea, or even ideal, about their audiences' reception, perception, and digestion of their specific messages and products. It can be concluded that the producer aims for a specific effect, called by Grossberg and colleagues the "intentional fallacy" between the intended and encoded meaning and the "received" and decoded meaning (1998:239). This effect or "reward" may be monetary, cognitive, physical, psychological, emotional or behavioural, and is of vital importance when explaining and teaching the context of the mass media to media literacy learners. It may also be valuable when striving to clarify the inexplicable magnetism that the mass media may have on its multitude of users (Fourie 2001b:284; Grossberg et al 1998:239–257; see also 3.2.3 for audience studies).

The mentioned extended anxieties and public debates about the manifest influence of the media, particularly on the youth, have been by no real means addressed, and

constructive plans to counter these effects during the 20th century were rare (Buckingham & Sefton-Green 1994: 17). Most of these campaigns about media awareness and the movements of concern have left society nowhere with regard to a solution as to how to really cope with these "malignant forces that have the power to directly reach, transform, and corrupt the minds of individuals so that their lives are ruined and vast social problems are created" (Baran & Davis 2003: 64).

It appears as if this impasse has deteriorated in the first phase of the third millennium, where the amount and reach of mass media messages have become virtually impossible to control (see also 1.1, 3.2.3 and 3.2.6). However, if the paradigm shift from the historical effect theories to a state of media literacy can indeed be achieved, and an empowering transformation can take place, whereby audiences can be supplied with equal power, therefore redressing the balance where the mass media are actually often accused unfairly of being the cause of most of the ills and wrongs in society.

It thus seems clear that people rather have to be taught how to live with all the extensions of the traditional media, as well as the latest innovations of mass communication, since the chances that the world will choose to cope without it "are virtually zero" (Harris 1994: 247), and "propelled by mounting population pressures, stunned by the speedy pace of fresh inventions shifting society too fast for us to handle, we risk whole populations seeking escape by abdicating their rights and responsibilities for the security of despotism ... we ask the media to become our Big Brother or our seductive soma" (Freed 2003).

The media environment should be navigated and explored, much like children are taught by their caretakers to negotiate all other dangerous playing-grounds and environments (Kipping 1995). Newton (in Biagi 1989: 5) has indeed warned: "Sorting out these messages is perhaps one of the most difficult tasks we face. Because of the almost exponential explosion of information, we cannot possibly sift through and assimilate the contents coming at us via the mass media. We are compelled to let others assess and compress information for us. We are, in a sense, victims of our own inability to handle such large quantities of information without confusion". On one of her popular talk-shows focusing on media literacy, media celebrity Oprah Winfrey interviewed the parents of a five year-old boy who refuses to sleep without his

television playing in his room. The parents apparently feel helpless and believe themselves to be at war against an adversary that they feel they are not equipped to control (Oprah Show, 17 July 2002, *e-tv*).

The relatively unfamiliar process of media literacy teaching in South Africa may therefore superficially seem as potential solution to the dilemma surrounding the effects and consequences of the media, specifically with a focus to involve the media consumers with specific knowledge and skills in their media consumption. The first step, however, would be to determine *exactly what* this phenomenon refers to, and where and when it originates from. Another justifiable and valid viewpoint should explore what the process of media literacy hopes to accomplish, since the occurrence is, as already mentioned, rare in the South African context as compared to the rest of the world, specifically developed countries.

2.2 Establishing a working definition for the concept of media literacy

Although the many existing and various definitions focus on different facets of the phenomenon, media literacy, in a hypothetical sense, mainly is about decoding, analyzing and evaluating the content of the mass media as well as the media itself, by means of critical thinking processes. This brief formula, however, tells little about the *who, what, where, when, why* and particularly the *how,* amongst other issues. Du Plooy (in Fourie (ed.) 2001b: 4) justifiably asks whether media literacy should be viewed as a skill, an accumulation of knowledge, a particular cultural perspective of the world, the ability to critically analyze media texts as creators of our view of the world, or a certain understanding of how media texts reduce consumers to social and material "clones".

Although scholars such as Meyrowitz (1998:96 - 108) supplies a categorization of three types of media literacy based on perspectives of the mass media — *media content* literacy, *media grammar* literacy and *medium* literacy — these broad descriptions in fact only produce new questions and definitions of the concept and process of media literacy education. These three types of literacy as defined by Meyrowitz (1998) indeed refers to advanced methods of media "reading" — skills which the *average consumer* or audience member does not need in order to navigate the media environment in a rudimentary manner. (Bennet and Entman's writings

(2001: 100) on the critical distinction between the media's consumers and "citizens" emphasize the market-orientated tendency of the news and other media content.)

Being a relatively unfamiliar concept in South Africa, especially within the context of school and tertiary education and even societal systems where the phenomenon is almost unfamiliar as an independent and self-sufficient field of study, media literacy needs to be circumscribed very accurately and precisely. It became clear through the course of the literature study that various media literacy leaders and organizations have different perspectives on both the definition of media literacy as well as to the approaches to teaching the subject (see Chapter 4 for teaching techniques and approaches), which can confuse any learner wanting to become involved in this crucial and challenging subject.

While some of the Canadian leaders — Canada being unanimously viewed in literature as *the* frontrunner and initiator in the quest for media literacy (see 3.4) — may for example emphasize the production of media messages as a vital step to media literacy, the acknowledged Japanese leader Suzuki Midori (2000; see Appendix B) on the other hand emphasizes the aspect of "unlearning not to think" — critical thinking skills in general — with reference to the mass media and its consumers. Media literacy seem to have as many layers as the mass media itself in terms of formats, genres and functions, characteristics, teaching approaches and techniques, and even benefits resulting from the process. In addition, the mass media as such comprise a multitude of formats.

What became apparent from the literature survey, is that there is no set and final definition for media literacy in the existing literature which sufficiently captures all the dimensions of this phenomenon. Indeed, various authors express their frustration with the fact that there is little consensus on its definition (Baran & Davis 2003; Greenaway in Forrest (ed.) 1999); Kipping 1995; Meyrowitz 1998; Tyner 2000) and various efforts to "clarify" the overlapping definitions can be found in literature (Rubin 1998: 3). Other scholars, while strongly advocating the implementation of media literacy education in schools and tertiary education as well as many other spheres of society (churches, parent groups, youth leaders, reading circles, libraries and "concerned" groups), are more vague about the exact meaning of the concept. Both Walsh (2001) and

Trampiets (2000b) argue that some of the confusion on a definition exists because there are two schools of thought about "teaching the media": one school suggesting that there should be an independent and separate course of study in media and media literacy; another that media literacy is part and parcel of every subject and every course in every school, including the various kinds of media that "saturate our daily lives" inclusively, forming part of creative teaching.

Some articles even maintain that media literacy literally suffers from "too much of a good thing. It isn't that no one knows what media literacy is. The problem is that everyone has earnest ideas about how to go about it. Because each media educator works in isolated circumstances, opportunities are rare for the kind of discourse necessary to hammer out a broad consensus about the processes, skills and principles that constitute a complete course of media study" (Tyner & Leveranz 2001). The use of the terms of both media literacy and media studies in this phrase testifies to the relatively vague conceptualization of these disciplines and study fields, and which understandably engenders some heated discussions in literature about this "small but growing discipline", where the debates often center around the goals and purposes of media education, and how much structure media education should include or not include.

Many descriptions of the concept and process are abstract in nature, pointing out that "media literacy transforms people into sophisticated citizens rather than sophisticated consumers" (Lewis & Jhally 1998: 109). Media literacy in this case is defined as "being a two-sided coin in which one side deals with helping us live productively and effectively in the information age by developing skills ... in evaluating information", while the second side "deals with the mass media environment defined as understanding how the media work, how they affect our lives and how to use them wisely" (Trampiets 2000a). A media literate person is, "put simply" by Heins and Cho (2002), someone possessing the critical thinking skills (see 5.6) needed to "read" mass media messages, rather than being passive consumers of movies, T-shirt, games and advertisements, know that media "realities" are "constructed" for a purpose, or is someone who possesses a functional rather than dysfunctional use of media by means of increased media use skills (Baran & Davis 2003: 374).

Because the aspect of media literacy is so strongly linked to the media effects perspectives (see 3.2.3 and 3.2.6), there is also a visible element in media literacy being an effort to censor the media in literature, and with a direct consequence to confront media power (University of Texas 2000). According to this perspective, media literacy is viewed as the latest innovation of the media effects history: from the bullet theory to limited effects, moderate effects and then powerful effects, to media hegemony and the view of cultivation in terms of media impact, potential censorship for media content, and lastly media literacy (University of Texas 2000). Bowens (2000) is of the opinion that media literacy becomes increasingly vital as media conglomerates expand their agendas of globalization, propaganda and state interference, as is still the case in many media environments and countries such as in Africa, while Heins and Cho (2002) argue that media literacy is indeed the only alternative to censorship, and much more preferable than the latter.

Yet another description or attempt at a definition of media literacy describes how the relationship between the mass media and its audiences/consumers should be *defined* and *restructured* (see transactional communication in 3.2.1). These two steps form the ultimate foundation steps of media literacy. Teaching approaches and practical perspectives on education (in Chapter 4) may differ, but as long as the media-user-relationship is critically questioned by means of observation, questioning, analysis, exploration and integration, media literacy will be accomplished, notwithstanding the fact that it could happen at different ages and stages of peoples' lives. The media should ultimately not be seen as a problem which can be fixed and curbed. The media are environments to be navigated and explored, specifically with reference to the Internet and cyber-space. McLuhan articulated it by saying that any understanding of social and cultural change is impossible without a knowledge of the way the media work as environments (McLuhan & Zigrone 1995). Teaching any child to navigate the environment of traffic or water or play-grounds are no more important than teaching him or her to navigate the media as an every-day environment they frequent.

The frustrating slow development of media literacy education's implementation in schools has, according to various academics, been hampered by the fact that the popular culture content of the media was seen as "less enriching or edifying" than

traditional curriculum subjects (Heins & Cho 2002; see 2.5.7 for popular culture). Walsh (2001) vaguely indicates that media literacy is not so much a new course of study as it is a new way of looking at the ways we communicate — including mass communication — in the new millennium, while it is paying attention to the "how" of communicating as well as to the "what" that is the topic of communication, enabling students to better receive and send messages in the media (cf. 3.2 and 3.2.1 for transactional communication).

It is equally clear from relevant literature that the process of media literacy can be applied to many different situations, levels and contexts. A superficial summary of the above-mentioned media literacy descriptions and definitions can provisionally be understood as a combination and culmination of the following:

- the capability to decode and evaluate media messages, specifically with a view to aspects of violence, sex, language, values, stereotyping, gender and cultural representation, amongst other issues;
- the negotiation of mass media messages as reconstructed reality;
- a navigation of the media environment in terms of various mediums;
- an understanding of how the media work and transmit information;
- a comprehension of the mass media producers – the communicators – and their ideology, aims, purposes, and political, financial and ideological intents;
- the ability to filter the manipulative elements from of a media message to improve coherent understanding;
- the knowledge that each message and medium/channel carries with it certain inherent values, *inter alia* that of the culture, the communicator, and the user/receiver; and
- the eventual capability to produce and create quality media messages if the need arises and if there is an available infrastructure.

For purposes of a broad working definition of media literacy against which to understand the ensuing content of the thesis, the following simplified formula has been constructed (see Box 1 below). (The contents were derived at by means of the content analysis as discussed in Chapter 5. The constructs used for the content analysis will consequently be used as building blocks for the proposed model for tertiary education

of media literacy, see 5.2 and 5.3).

On a cognitive level, media literacy can be described as **the education/teaching of cognitive methods to assist the learner to realize/comprehend his/her part (both as audience member and individual consumer of the media), in the creation of mass media culture, by means of the analysis and deconstruction of media messages, and by challenging the traditions and functions of commercial media culture, resulting in a healthy scepticism and understanding of the content and impact of the mass media.**

The above working definition is restricted to the *cognitive perspective and elements* of media literacy. The content analysis of a directory of fifty (50) existing and acknowledged descriptions of and statements on the nature and process of media literacy (see Appendix A) yielded considerably more aspects (see Chapter 5.2) than the mere cognitive conditions in which a theoretical and academic view of media literacy is contained.

2.3 A brief history of the development of the media literacy movement

2.3.1 First stirrings of media literacy

The field of media literacy as an independent study terrain in the United States of America and Canada got off to a hesitant start in the late 1960s, before going dormant (see also 3.4). It did not resurface again until the early 1980s, when it struggled around in the dark for a while with little interest and attention, and eventually died — apparently dishonorably. Fortunately, other countries, specifically England, Australia and Japan, have been treating the subject seriously for more than 20 years now, particularly in the context of school education. Ironically, the United States, the greatest disseminator of popular culture in the history of the world, allegedly pays the least attention to the mass media's pervasive influences and, in fact, regularly features at the bottom of the list of international media-literacy levels (*Education Forum* 1991; Kubey & Baker 1998: 58). South Africa does *not* appear on this consequential international list (see 3.6).

Harris (1994: 247) relates that there were indeed consumer media-education movements and evidence of media activists as far back as the 1970s, although interest greatly increased during the 1980s (Alvarado, Robin & Wollen 1987; Brown 1998; Manley-Casimir & Luke 1987; Masterman 1985:9; Ploghoft & Anderson 1982) which only really gained momentum during the decade of 1990. Heins and Cho (2002) say that the first manifestations of media literacy surfaced as "critical thinking" in a few American schools, and that the movement in the USA during the decade of the seventies consisted primarily of scattered and small-scale efforts of a few concerned teachers who were growing apprehensive about the possible impact of the media on scholars.

The environment and consumer movements of the 1980s have prompted academics and educators to look more critically not only at man's stewardship of the planet's physical resources, but also at their use of leisure time — possibly one of the current biggest money-making industries — which includes society's relationship to the media's representations of the world. Today we can acknowledge that culture embraces social attitudes, values, images, and codes. Communication technology, television in particular, has transformed the cultural landscape, leaving many a trifle bewildered (*Education Forum* Spring 1991).

The prolific growth and explosion of the mass media, however, may have forced the media literacy movement's supporters and advocates to pick up speed, insisting on a paradigm shift in terms of audience responsibility and action. Another possible cause may be the alleged world-wide decline in social, religious and moral values, which may also have stimulated the recent surge of studies focusing on the positive effects of media literacy education and the inclusion of popular media content as opposed to the multitude of earlier studies emphasizing the potentially damaging and harmful effects of the mass media's content.

2.3.2 Developmental phases of the media literacy movement

The history of media literacy can be seen in terms of four important historical paradigms of media literacy education (Hart 1997: vii-xi; Walsh 1996):

- Before the 1930s, educators, for the most part, ignored media and media education. During this time, newspapers, books and radio were the main role-players in the so-called media environment.
- In the 1930s, the view of media as a cultural disease from which children must be protected, was fostered. Culture was seen as contaminated by the commercial media that pervades it, creating a false consciousness, corrupting language, and destroying high-culture and the minds of children by supplying low-culture entertainment (cf. Frankfurt School in Baran & Davis 2003: 230; During 2001: 285; Orlik 2001: 23; Ward 2000: 139). Media literacy, in this case, was merely a protection against the media: combating media by teaching *against* it, rather than *about* it. The eventual result was not one of empowerment but rather of censorship. The threat of propaganda gradually faded, according to Baran and Davis (2003: 131), and mass society notions began to lose some of its broad appeal.
- In the 1960s the postmodernist phase was supported, which propagated the view that some aspects of media had good qualities, intellectual and cultural merit that deserved studying became popularized. This paradigm furthered that idea that there are categories of media: "good" media and "bad" media. Media literacy education involved teaching children how to tell the difference, implying that media education could improve children's "taste." The long-term effects of extended media exposure only now became detectable for the first time, e.g. in terms of speculation about the causes of declining literacy. It was equally clear that the media are not going to disappear, and Walsh (1996) describes this phase as the "inoculation phase" during which teachers injected small doses of mass media into their courses "to show how empty, silly and valueless it was", striving to protect students from the dangerous germs of current media culture.
- Starting in the late 1970s, the view that the media could be viewed as signifying systems that needed to be read critically was initially advanced by the study of semiotics. This paradigm established the idea that the ideological power of media has much to do with the naturalness of the images and the tendency of the media to transmit encoded, constructed messages as if they were real images. Questions of power and the politics of representation also came to the fore, involving the production, circulation,

transmission, and consumption of media images and messages, especially raising questions about the power to produce, define and create media, and who were defined as audiences. Walsh (1996) however emphasizes that media literacy education is still a difficult struggle, "because there are still those who choose to ignore it, make fun of it, or use it to suck students into a study of something else entirely".

This ultimately heralded the youngest chapter in the media effects studies and research development. Thoman (1992), says that there are three typical ways of coping with the image culture's (the content of the mass media) state, namely denial, rejection or resistance — which view corresponds with the above phases. These types of events in the chain of development are characterized by three typical responses (Thoman 1992; Baran & Davis 2003:130 – 131):

- *Denial.* Hoping that the problem of the media and its effects will go away if it is ignored is a natural response, but no solution to its ubiquitous presence.
- *Rejection.* Some critics believe they can use their television dials to make the image culture go away, and urge others to turn it off too. But it is impossible to turn off an entire culture. Others check out emotionally by using drugs, alcohol, addictions of all kinds to vainly mask the hunger for meaning that comes when reality and images don't converge.
- *Resistance.* A surprisingly active counterculture exists and is working hard to point out the dangers of over-reliance on the image culture. But such criticism is negative by its very nature, and critics tend to remain voices crying in the wilderness, while they accomplish the opposite in terms of the searchlight focusing on these issues.

As a result, communication scholars started to respond to the "twin realities of different media extending our senses in different ways" (Baran & Davis 2003: 378), and a positive alternative was becoming urgent and vital (Thoman 1992). This could be achieved in the form of *media awareness*: a recognition of the media's role in shaping our lives and molding our deepest thoughts and feelings. This would mean being aware, carefully examining, asking questions, becoming conscious, skilled and functional media users (cf. Baran & Davis 2003; Biagi 2003). People can recognize

and should deal with the image culture's actual state, which might be characterized as a kind of crisis — a crisis of identity.

Supporting the above argument, Littlejohn (1999:336–337) directly links several reasons for the vehement criticism on modern societies, the mass society and the mass media. The concept and theory of the faceless mass society saw people who all lost their individuality, and where small groups, community life and ethnic identity are replaced by society-wide depersonalized relations — agreeing with current resonances of globalization and monopolized media hegemony — and which transpired as a result of the following:

- The rapid transportation and communication developments which accelerated human contact cause people to be more interdependent in the Global Village, while there are little community and family ties and old values are sharply questioned and outweighed.
- Society is no longer believed to be led by the elite and morals, tastes and values decline and are determined by the masses with no specific leader, and masses of people without any sense of self-identity.
- The media are blurring social boundaries and community divisions which in the past gave stability and meaning to the lives of individuals. Television in particular blurred all boundaries between the private and public, the physical and social and between social groups, who are left to feel that they do not have a place in the world.

Fore-runner in the Canadian effort for media literacy, Pat Kipping (1995), says: "After years of trying to get educators, parents, politicians and activists to take mass media seriously as an important influence on thinking, learning, citizenship, work and relationships, I think media literacy advocates can safely say we are finally getting somewhere. Even the cable television industry supports media literacy, although I am not sure that they mean the same thing as I do. Everybody these days, from the CRTC to the local home and school association, seems to be taking the media seriously, discussing the problems and posing solutions." Although this trend is heartening, the *media should be made peace with* while admitting all the problems contained therein. There is no escaping from the media (Baran & Davis 2003; Biagi 2003), and the most important component of critical media awareness is to

understand the quality of the relationship between the media. What is vital, is the building of healthy, autonomous, active relationships between users and the media — transactional and reciprocal communication in a real sense (see 3.2.1). The media can always be used to the user's advantage and for fulfilment rather than to acknowledge that it is benefiting only the communicators' commercial and political agendas.

Media awareness is a positive, constructive alternative whereby the media's role in shaping people's lives and molding their deepest thoughts and feelings is acknowledged. It can be summarized as a state of *mindfulness*: being aware, carefully examining, asking questions, being conscious of the media content we are interacting with, and thus constituting the newest development in the media effects history.

2.3.3 Contemporary research studies with a focus on media literacy

According to Hobbs and Frost (2001), a number of research studies have proven indeed that media literacy and media education in either school-based or home-based environments can be effective with proven results. One issue proved interesting: research has demonstrated that an adult's comments and observations — known as parental mediation or co-viewing about television programming have significant effects on children's attitudes and behaviour. The following studies in this regard are worth mentioning:

- Buerkel-Rothfuss, Greenberg, Atkin and Neuendorf in 1982 proved that children learn about affiliative behaviour from viewing family television shows;
- Desmond, Hirsch and Nicol in 1985 found that the understanding of television and judgments about reality and fantasy improved as a result of media education;
- Media literacy reduces total viewing time of children, according to Desmond, Singer and Singer in 1990. All these studies in Hobbs & Frost 2001).

Hobbs and colleague Frost conducted an extensive study on media literacy skills under 333 15-year old students enrolled in secondary schools in Melbourne, Australia (2001). The aim was to measure the differences between students who have had

formal exposure to media education classes and those whose exposure has been less systematic. The research found significant differences between groups in terms of the respondents' ability to analyze media messages. An important finding was the fact that students' media comprehension skills and media consumption habits are related to their media analysis skills. There was nevertheless an indication that increased skills in media message analysis did not seem to reduce media consumption.

Other valuable studies (in Hobbs & Frost 2001), focusing on the effects of and the field of study of media literacy as well as media education, deserve brief mentioning:

- Quinn and McMahon in 1995 developed a set of outcomes identifying the basic sub-skills of media analysis, focusing on the five categories, namely language, narrative, production processes, audience and values.
- The British Film Institute, under leadership of Bazalgette during 1992, adapted different schemes to organize media literacy skills.
- Hobbs and Frost (1997) reported results from a large sample of ninth grade students in a Massachusetts high school to demonstrate how different types of media literacy skills were associated with different types of teaching practices at a secondary level.
- In France, also in 1997, Bevort and DeSmedt, developed a similar measurement of students' media literacy skills which involved screening a short video work or displaying a newspaper article, followed by specific questions regarding the content and form of the messages.
- A couple of studies, namely Singer, Zuckerman and Singer (1980) and Austin and Johnson (1997), both demonstrated how a short course of media literacy skills training affected the attitudes and behaviour of third-grades in relation to alcohol advertising.
- Christenson, first in 1982 and then in 1985, estimated that young people see more than 40 000 television commercials per year. In 1991, Comstock found that many children experience a disorientation between ages nine and thirteen when they discover through the purchase of a toy or food product that television has an ability to create a false or "unreal reality" that conflicts with personal and direct experience.
- In 1997, Messaris described viewer's poor general awareness of any of the processes by which meaning is created through visual media, being unable

to make distinctions about different genres of television "realism" and techniques used to enhance realism. Knowledge of media production processes did not appear to be related to increased awareness of the constructed nature of media messages and the ability to identify an author's motives, purposes and point of view.

- Comstock, in 1991, found that students' familiarity with different media genres — particularly news and advertising genres — may affect their ability to engage in different types of tasks requiring the critical analysis of the mass media. The research found that adolescents generally watch a limited range of programming, primarily focusing on situation comedies, light entertainment, "reality TV", movies, music videos and sports programming.
- Children and "youth" had substantial exposure to television news as shown in a study conducted by Adoni, Cohen and Mane during 1984, in which 100 000 young people were tested about news-watching habits. Of this sample, 41% of fourth graders, 45% of eighth graders and 49% of eleventh graders said that they viewed news daily (Hobbs and Frost 2001).

An interesting phenomenon is found in the medical and health context, where psychologists and pediatricians in particular are convinced that a higher degree of media literacy can counter the prolific development of *anorexia nervosa* and *bulimia* under young girls and teenagers. One particular study (Irving & Berel 2001: 103) describes an experiment where it was endeavoured to examine if two distinct media literacy interventions could promote media scepticism and reduce negative body image in a sample of college women. In comparison to the non-intervention condition, both media literacy interventions were similar in effectiveness in increasing participants' skepticism about the realism, similarity and desirability of media that depict a thin ideal of beauty.

Another evolvement was noticed in the literature survey — a wealth of studies springing from the health and medical world speculated on the effects of the media from a health perspective, and in many cases even intensively researched this issue. A specific pediatrics study (Rich & Bar-on 2001: 156) has tried to determine what pediatric residency programs are teaching trainees about the media and the influence of the media on the physical and mental health of children and adolescents. They

found that, despite increasing awareness of the tremendous effect of media influence on child health, less than one third of US pediatric residency programs teach about media exposure, concluding that the development of a pediatric media curriculum and training pediatric residency directors or designed faculty members may be a resource-effective means of improving health for children growing up in a media-saturated environment (see 3.3.9. and 3.3.11).

In yet another research study conducted by the American Academy of Pediatrics (2001: 423), the study describes the possible negative health effects of television viewing on children and adolescents, such as violent or aggressive behaviour, substance abuse, sexual activity, obesity, poor body image and decreased school performance (see also 3.3.2 and 3.3.9). Media education has been found as an effective approach to mitigating these potential problems, and the article in conclusion offers a list of recommendations on this issue for pediatricians, parents, the federal government and the entertainment industry.

As far as research into media literacy in Britain is concerned, Barton (2000: D9) wrote a lengthy article on how to move with the media, suggesting new ways to teach media education in British schools in order to help students to become more discriminating when they are exposed to the mass media. It should be expected that more suchlike studies will be necessitated as increasingly more people are exposed to newer formats and genres in the media and information technology landscapes.

On the media literacy listserv of Frank Baker on 15 August 2002, a study by Rosenkoetter and Rosekoetter (2002: Media-L 4533) was reported about a media literacy program which shows promise to reduce the impact of television violence on children's shows. The basic approach is to develop television literacy as early as possible in the lower grades, which seems more effective than trying to change young children's viewing habits itself, "trying to teach children to be critical viewers instead of preaching right answers to them". Within the context of many South African societal, health and welfare problems, media literacy holds tremendous promise to change the effect and impact of the mass media on young minds. Studies are vitally needed in this field of study, particularly with reference to HIV/Aids and the effects of promiscuous and unprotected sex as often seen in the media (compare also 3.3.3) .

2.4 Media literacy and other manifestations of literacy

Terminology surrounding the ability to read and write — traditional or standard literacy — has expanded in the last decades to include terms such as visual literacy, illiteracy, aliteracy and computer or information literacy. In order to understand the phenomenon of media literacy, a comprehension of the mentioned terminology can act as clarification thereof.

2.4.1 Standard literacy

The Cambridge International Dictionary of English (2001) — as well as most other dictionaries — simply declares that literacy is "the ability to read and write". A distinction can be made between *functional and conventional literacy*. The latter refers to the ability to read, write and compute well enough to survive in one's environment, whereas functional literacy includes:

- the possession of skills perceived by the individual to fulfil his/her own objectives;
- the ability to obtain information they need or want and understand and use information;
- the ability to read and write adequately to satisfy oneself;
- the ability to deal positively with the demands made by society; and
- the ability to solve problems one faces in one's daily life (Heiser in Trezzo 1989: 117 – 120].

Sonderling (in Fourie (ed.) 2001b: 117) expands on this distinction by saying that there are two certain groupings of people who are on the one hand "less educated and predominantly use oral communication, as against the more educated and literate for whom writing and printed texts have more importance". Meek (1991: 3) argues that literacy "exalts the poor to the level of the powerful ... adding to people's sense of human worth and dignity, consciousness ... sympathies and understanding in the ordinary process of [communication]. These statements suggest that literacy is something more than the mere ability to read and write, and that it may also include a specific level of cultural development. Winfield (2000) disputes that literacy is taken for granted by the majority of people in the West, and that this Western tradition views

literacy as a practice that develops and expands knowledge rather than a mere skill of reading and writing.

It seems as if literacy always figures on a continuum (Meek 1991: 207), bringing with it not only skills to read and write better and faster, but also to access and analyze texts, as Bazalgette (in Lusted 1991: 172) explains "[m]ost people agree that fully literate readers bring many understandings to a text: they can recognize what kind of text it is, predict how it will work, relate it to other texts in appropriate ways. They can thus understand it critically, enjoying its pleasure, engaging with its argument, reading between and beyond the lines". Literacy in the previous statement obviously refers to language and literature, but Bazalgette (in Lusted 1991: 173) argues that every mass medium also has an own language, a way of organizing meaning, which receivers learn how to read, bring their own understanding to it, and extend their experiences through it. (These perspectives incidentally correspond with the views of McLuhan, see also 3.2.6).

As a means of explanation it can be pointed out that not all literate people — referring to those who can read and write well — will be able to access Shakespearian literature, since it is based on a unique "language" and cultural framework of its own, just as a newspaper-literate person may not be visually literate in terms of television or film.

Supporting the above arguments, literature is rife with statements from admonishing scholars who already warned earlier that it is no longer sufficient to read and write (Boyer 2001; Center for Media Literacy 2002; McLuhan 1964: 130, 285; Meek 1991: 207; Messaris 1993, 1994). The messages in the many visual media (advertisements, films, television and magazines) must also be "read" by young people and children. It seems therefore as if media literacy is indeed used as a replacement by media literacy scholars of standard literacy which does no longer suffice in the "Age of Information" and the "Mind Age" (Downs 2000).

This correlates with various literature studies (Ruggeiro 1995; Walsh 1991) in many of the pedagogical and language disciplines, and even psychology maintains that literacy is correlated with logical and analytical modes of thought, general and abstract use of

language, critical and rational thought, a sceptical and questioning attitude, a distinction between myth and history, the recognition of the importance of time and space, complex and modern governments, political democracy and greater social equity. It also, to certain measures, implicates economic development, wealth and productivity, political stability, urbanization, lower birth rates, people who are achievement oriented, productive, cosmopolitan, politically aware, more globally and less locally oriented, who have more liberal and humane social attitudes, are less likely to commit a crime, and more likely to take the rights and duties of citizenship seriously. It is clear that literacy in this description also underlines a certain standard of development and civilization.

Shor (in Shor & Pari (eds.) 1999:1) makes a distinction between literacy and critical literacy, explaining the former as social action through language use that develops us "inside a larger culture", whereas critical literacy is understood as "learning to read and write as part of the process of becoming conscious of one's experience as historically constructed within specific power relations". Critical literacy rather represents the ability to understand how all speakers, writers, and producers of visual texts are situated in particular contexts with significant personal, social and cultural aspects. The above makes it clear that literacy is much more than the mere ability to read and write, but rather involves discerning skills which facilitate living in a social world and culture together with other people.

In the same tenor, Kaplan (2001) urges that an understanding of literacy in the age of the digital, new media must begin by understanding literacy not as a simple and single act of encoding or decoding messages by means of various and interchangeable media, but rather as a complex collection of technological, social, and material practices which promote the development of radically new life-styles and commodities, leading academics to talk of *e-literacy* or *new media literacies* in the plural (cf. Brunner & Tally 2000; Kaplan 1995; Kellner 2000; Yildiz 2002). *E-literacies* can be broadly described as the knowledge and skill required to make marks in an electronic age with electronic devices. Such knowledge and skills generally includes alphabetic literacies as well as a rudimentary grasp of a computer's interface.

Wong (in Grossberg et al. 1998: 43) says that the advent of printing, requiring literacy, fostered exactitude and precision, and lead to legislation for the correct use of language, while also reinforcing the sense of individuality and privacy (cf. McLuhan 1964; Meek 1991). This may be one of the biggest implications of the audio-visual technological media, where watching television and film has become social past-times with other people, thus altering the structures of human consciousness and thought. However, it seems from literature that aliteracy is actually growing, rather than tapering off. *Aliteracy* refers to a person who can read, but does not do so, because he or she does not find it in any way appealing or pleasurable, or who only reads when forced and compelled to do so. Actually, this represents one of the main thrusts behind the call for media literacy: a decline in willingness and motivation to read, acquire knowledge and cultivate specific skills. Readership indeed seems to be going down everywhere (Twining 1998: 113).

The aspects of the above extended definitions of functional literacy applies excellently to the concept of media literacy, particularly when referring to the abilities to obtain information they need or want, and understand and use information in order to deal positively with the demands made by society. The question comes to mind whether consumerism, sex and violence, for example, will also classify as "demands" made by society — which reminds one of the Frankfurt School's beliefs (see 2.3.2 and 2.4.5).

Other researchers have extended the term *literacy* to *computer literacy* (Adams, Carlson & Hamm 1990) while the phrases *lifelong learning* and *resource-based learning* also appear. Both of these terms have tenets in the media literacy ideology, where learners can be equipped and empowered by specific knowledge contents and skills when interacting with the mass media and information technology such as the Internet. One of the central goals of all education is to help students understand the world they live in. Because so much of this world is shaped by the media, it is imperative that classroom teachers and literacy educators expand the traditional definition of literacy to include an understanding of channels of mass communication. Interactive media, in particular the Internet, have emerged as an important area of study in the discipline of media literacy, where students can learn to take full advantage of their wondrous possibilities.

The electronic mass media bypass traditional literacy and literary circles, group associations and national boundaries (cf. Bucy 2002; Kaplan 2001; Meyrowitz 1998). These media give us a new worldview "by thrusting us among people who have not read what we have read, have not shared our territory, and may not even speak our language" (Bucy 2002:32). While print allows for new ways of sharing *knowledge*, and industrialization enables the wide-scale scattering of *products*, electronic media tend to foster new types of shared *experience.*

Buckingham and Sefton-Green (1994:104) highlighted the definition of literacy as both a mechanical and social process and stated that "[t]he control of 'film grammar', picture composition and *mise en scène* could all be compared with the control of narrative, character and dialogue that characterizes print literacy ... extending the metaphor of media literacy may well lead us to reconceptualize print literacy itself". These authors draw a direct parallel between literacy on the one hand which can be seen as a functional skill, and literacy which cannot be separated from its social context and relationships in which they are acquired and used, and rather represents a social and cultural process (Buckingham & Sefton-Green 1994: 5). An even more recent terminology is raised as Prinsloo and Breier (1991: 16,17) speak of "The New Literacy Studies", where research findings correspond with classical positive outcomes of literacy, *inter alia* producing particular universal characteristics and values, raising cognitive skills, enabling people "to be detached", developing a meta-cognitive understanding and rational outlook being crucial for progress.

McLuhan (1964; also in Whetmore 1993: 19) said that writing "has the power to translate man from the tribal to the civilized sphere". What the Western world think of as a civilized society cannot exist without reading and writing, and claim that "if it is important it will be in print". The continent of Africa, however, standing partially in the culture of the West and partially in the traditions and cultures of Africa, may need another perspective. Should we think of the San [Bushmen] of Southern Africa, they may not be literate, but that would not render them as a society and culture which are "uncivilized" in all respects, judging by the norms of the West.

Since the first true mass media were the book and the newspaper, a necessary precondition for the leap of true mass communication was wide-spread and basic

literacy, meaning the ability to read and write. However, there are degrees of literacy, and furthermore different texts vary immensely in terms of "readability, a characteristic measured by a number of other specific indices" (Rosengren 2000:140). Basic literacy thus does not imply that so-called literate people will be able at all to "read" the contents and formats of the mass media they are exposed to.

Some people may not even be able to read a children's book without tremendous effort, whilst others can speed-read extremely dense and complicated texts. Different texts and media genres require different levels of literacy. Examples that come to mind are the differences between the so-called "knock-and-drops" (tabloid community newspapers distributed free of charge) and the *Mail and Guardian*, possibly South Africa's best (investigative and political commentary) weekly newspaper. Another local comparison which will suffice is the levels of literacy demanded by a magazine such as *You* or *Drum* versus *Time* or *Newsweek*, of which both the latter are characterized by small, complicated text on advanced issues such as cloning and genetically manipulated food, or the threat of Anthrax and artificial insemination.

South Africa, according to the Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, battles with functional illiteracy as high as an estimated 40 percent (Sawyer in *Cape Argus* 1999:1), although more recent documents put the percentage much lower. Ironically, South Africa and most other undeveloped countries in Asia and Africa are not the only societies battling with the appalling notion of illiteracy. It is a world-wide phenomenon and whilst the visual media develop [and move] faster than the speed of light, the levels of illiteracy seems to grow everywhere. In 1988:

> ...it is estimated that twenty five million Americans cannot read or write at all. An additional thirty-five million are functionally illiterate and cannot read or write well enough to answer a want ad or understand the instructions on a medicine bottle. That adds up to sixty million people – nearly one third of the population ... it is probable that the country is producing at least that many new illiterates or semi-literates every new year (Biagi 1989: 232).

(McLuhan's warnings about declining literacy in the face of the proliferating mass media and its effects seem to get new meaning in this context.)

What is clear, is that there are no clear-cut borders for literacy as concept and process. Media literacy, however, will possibly incorporate specific levels of literacy — being able to read and write and therefore becoming a more competent and social human being — called visual literacy and information literacy. It can nevertheless be argued that it is hypothetically possible for an illiterate person to be marginally visually or media literate, even if the chances are slim. One illiterate person may have grown up with radio as the only accessible medium, and after many years of use that person will certainly display certain media literacy knowledge and skills with reference to radio as such. The level of media literacy, however, would be debatable. It may suffice to accept Downs's (2001) definition of literacy as *the inclusive literacy for people in the 21st century.*

An interesting remark regarding literacy within the context of the "sharing of meaning" during the communication process comes from Buckingham and Sefton-Green (1994:38), stating that we should move beyond an account of the reading process to individualistic notions of response. Meaning should not be regarded as something which is produced in the isolated encounter between the reader and the text (cf. Kitis & Milapedes 1997: 562; Maclean 1988: 187), but should rather focus on the social production and circulation of meaning, which is an inevitable consequence of the broader social theory of literacy. This explains why media literacy sits comfortably in the communication discipline.

2.4.2 Communication literacy

One definition for communication literacy appeared in the literature survey (University of Washington 2001). Communication literacy is hereby defined as a merger of speech and communication skills which creates a "novel and expanded perspective on future communication enquiries". According to this perspective, communication is identified as an unique area of study in the sense that its content is mirrored in its use, allowing students to explore communication in both its conceptual and applied contexts, including issues such as "media viewing and reading, new media and technology and cultural and intercultural interaction". According to this article, communication literacy is consistent with liberal arts education in arts and social sciences.

Kellner (2000) warns that people should be aware that the new millennium will introduce one of the most dramatic technological revolutions in history, that changes everything from "the ways that we work, communicate, and spend our leisure time. The technological revolution centers on computer, information, communication, and multimedia technologies, is often interpreted as the beginnings of a knowledge or information society". From this statement, it becomes clearer how close the various "literacies" described here are to each other in a new comprehensive communication "literacy".

2.4.3 Information literacy and competence

The terms of information literacy and information competence are concepts which are encountered increasingly in literature pertaining to communication, the mass media, media studies and media literacy. A simplified definition drawn from various descriptions in related articles can conclude that *information literacy* refers to the ability to locate, evaluate and effectively use information in order to become independent life-long learners; to recognize when information is needed and to communicate this information in various formats. It will help students to become "skillful producers and consumers of information in a learning community not limited by time, place, age, occupation or disciplinary borders" (AASL 1998)

It is also specified as "a new liberal art that extends from knowing how to use computers and access information to critical reflection on the nature of information itself ... and its social, cultural and even philosophical context and impact" (Shapiro & Hughes 1996). Considering the Internet as one of the dominant mass mediums, these descriptions can be transposed to the concept of media literacy. *Information competence* can therefore be specified as the "the fusing or the integration of library literacy, computer literacy, media literacy, technological literacy, ethics, critical thinking, and communication skills" (Report from the Work Group on Information Competence 1995; also in Lister et al. 2002).

The inclusion of media literacy as one of the sub-skills of information literacy deserves mentioning. In the modern communication environment, postmodern technology created a total union of media referred to by some scholars as *hypermedia*, being a powerful combination of various tools such as computers, videotape, photography and

even mobile data. Still new terminology evades everyday-communication, such as e-commerce, artificial intelligence, multimedia and a host of Internet descriptions, making it at times difficult to keep up in the new media ecology and landscape. Bucy (2002) calls this the "mediamorphic process", being a transformation of communication media, usually brought about by the complex interplay of perceived needs, competitive and political pressures and social and technological innovations, causing people to think about the media's evolution in a new way. It is clear that no person in the communication and media world who wants to compete in the professional and business realms, can actually afford to lag behind and not be information literate and competent.

Historically, Freed (2003) sees media literacy as firstly referring to basic computer operation skills, after which the meaning was expanded to "include critical thinking skills, the ability to objectively analyze media content, detecting subtle propaganda ploys and rhetorical ruses persuading audiences ... deceitfully". He also insists that the standard for media literacy must now be enlarged again to "understand the nature and power of interactivity itself, a universal interactivity ... a global sensibility". This statement clearly implicates an understanding of the transactional communication process, in which the sharing of meaning is of primary importance (cf. 3.2). Kellner (2000) argues that *multiple literacies* are needed for our multicultural society, and that society needs to develop these to meet the challenge of new media and technologies. The media are altering every aspect of society and culture, for which education must equip learners.

Silverblatt (1995), amongst various other proponents of the discipline, advocates media literacy as a concept which can extend the concept of traditional literacy, where the latter is defined as the ability to read and write and which is a traditional and fundamental part of school curricula to prepare students to make sense of their worlds. Media literacy builds on that definition of literacy and its place in the curriculum by recognizing the ways in which the mass and popular media shape students' understanding of their environment.

2.4.4. Visual literacy

Media literacy educator and membership chairman of the Alliance for a Media Literate

America (AMLA), Professor Reneé Hobbs (2000) emphasizes that "[e]ducators are beginning to recognize that the powerful skills of literacy — accessing, analyzing, evaluating and communicating — must be extended to include those visual and electronic messages that now saturate nearly every aspect of daily life". Merely dealing with the traditional forms of text made up by the conventional alphabet will not suffice anymore. There are far too many different types of texts and genres which need specialized analytic skills during reception by the audience.

The mass media serve as primary sources of sensory stimulation, knowledge gain and need satisfaction, making life without them literally impossibly. Information technologies and "entertainment media" saturate modern life, making it difficult to imagine life without the environmental nature of today's communication media and ecology (Bucy 2002: 1). From works of scholars such as Messaris (1993 and 1994) and Medved (1992), it is evident that visual literacy is merely another description or manifestation of media literacy, while the latter is repeatedly described as an extended form of literacy. Messaris (1993) states that visual literacy is a prerequisite for the comprehension of visual media; creating an awareness of the general cognitive consequences of visual literacy, creating an alertness in individuals to visual manipulation and promoting aesthetic appreciation of the visual images and media.

James Potter (2001: 4) specified the terms by saying that "[i]n the minds of most people, the term *literacy* is mostly associated with the print media, meaning the ability to read" (Scribner & Cole 1981; Sinatra 1986). Some academics expand the term to *visual literacy* as they think about other media such as film and television (Goodwin & Whannel 1990; Messaris 1994). Proponents of the phenomenon and term of "visual literacy" confess that they feel uncomfortable about the literacy aspect applied to visual media, since they do not see literacy as a condition to access pictorial and visual material, and if a person is not "literate", the conventions of visual representations will remain transparent to the inexperienced reader (Gibson 1982; Hochberg 1984 in Santana in 1998; Messaris 1993 and 1994).

More than 30 years ago, Debes (1970:1) already stated that visual literacy refers to a group of vision-competencies human beings can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences, which is fundamental to normal human learning. A visually literate person will therefore become able to discriminate

and interpret visual actions, objects and symbols, and so comprehend and enjoy works of visual communication. A definition of visual literacy ten years later described "Visual Communication Education" as a sensory education in which emphasis is placed on aesthetic and cognitive development of learners, facilitated by experiential education and promoted through the student making his or her own images of the world, both as a process of thinking and as a product which communicates these ideas to others (Grenfell & Krane 1979: 7). In the relevant literature, it is, however, quite clear that Australia, for example, has been battling with the delineation of the definitions and parameters of various study fields such as media studies, media education, visual literacy, media literacy, arts education and even graphic communication studies.

A fierce debate on the term "visual literacy" has been raging for many years in the communications world, but it can eventually be summarized as the ability, through knowledge of the basic visual elements, to understand the meaning and components of the image, which essentially describe literacy with specific reference to the visual media such as television, film and the Internet (On-line Visual Literacy Project 1998). Messaris (1994: 3-4) insists that a knowledge about visual effects — being visually media literate — can lessen the vicarious thrills people derive from visual media, but someone can also be visually literate even in the absence of any previous experience with pictures, thus rather being based on information-processing skills than "visual literacy" as such. Briefly put, visual literacy is the ability to understand and interpret the representation and symbolism of a static or moving visual image — how the meanings of the images are organized and constructed to make meaning — and to understand their impact on viewers.

Paradoxically, as literacy is growing in this decade and new century, so is the growth of those media which do not call for any literacy in the traditional sense of the word, namely radio, film and television, particularly on community levels and in rural areas. It thus seems ironic in a certain sense that there may be a diminishing need for traditional literacy, while pictorial, auditive and visual literacy is becoming increasingly accessible and popular for the many reasons mentioned already. These types of literacy however form sub-disciplines of the academic field of interest of media literacy.

Certain groundbreaking media literacy scholars have yet another perspective of media literacy, i.e. Potter (2001: 4). He views media literacy rather as a certain level of

knowledge of general news and popular culture matters, which is deemed as important in the interpretation of meaning from messages we encounter. Potter sees this information from the media as our raw material, and our tools as the skills we apply to the mass media content. This should occur in an active manner which implies that we should be aware of the messages and *are consciously interacting with them.* A good knowledge about general political, economical, cultural and social matters as well as popular culture does not however add up to media literacy yet. This may in fact equate with cultural literacy (see 2.4.5).

One of the first questions to be raised at the suggestion of media literacy education, particularly in terms of a self-reliant discipline and subject, will be what the potential benefits and advantages can be to learners and society-at-large (see 2.6.2). Even though some of these issues are simultaneously the "symptoms" and reasons — diseases? — calling for the implementation of media literacy, this matter of possible dividends will be briefly addressed. It is, however, clear at this stage that media literacy in any event deals with the accessing, decoding and deconstruction — in short, the "reading" — of media content regardless of the medium, format, genre or even communicator. It also includes the ability to distinguish between the different types of media, the *media texts* and *languages*. What is of the essence, however, is that "[m]aking sense of the media is a process in which individual and collective identities are defined and negotiated ... [i]n making meaning and in establishing our own tastes and preferences, we are simultaneously defining the meanings of our own social lives and positions" (Buckingham & Sefton-Green 1994: 38). The last statement emphasizes the potential broad terrain of media literacy and all the other above manifestations of literacy.

2.4.5 Cultural literacy

The tradition of cultural studies, according to Littlejohn (1999: 235), is reformist in orientation, as these scholars want to see changes in society by "jarring both the audience and the workers in the media back from becoming too accepting of their illusions or existing practices so they will question them and their conditions". This statement ironically and literally sums up the ideal and purpose of media literacy.

One of the developments which has spurred cultural studies is the tendency to view more and more domains of human activity precisely as 'culture', while the culture in cultural studies points to the sociologically and anthropologically grounded concerns with the practices and products of human activity. Meaning in communication is seen as socially constructed (see 3.2.4), and cultural studies is very much directed toward trying to establish exactly how it is structured, articulated and circulated in various settings. Questions of identity – the socially constructed self, not least with regard to gender – figure prominently and emphasizes the role of pleasure and the position of the unconscious in this process (Dahlgren & Sparks 1992: 5; see also 3.2.3). Grossberg et al. (1998: 9) even say that one of the most common misuses of the term "media" equates it with popular culture – people tend, for example, to confuse television as a medium of communication with the entertainment content that defines the bulk of its programming.

Media education is always specific to the culture in which it finds its context. "Existing at the interface of any society's political, socioeconomic, educational and broadcasting system, media education inevitably follows the unique contours of its host culture. Media education aspires to be an active force within its own culture" (Masterman in Hamelink & Linné (eds.) 1994: 310). On the necessity for a marginal knowledge of culture — cultural literacy — much has been said in literature as well. Grossberg et al. (1998: 339) say that levels of education are not the only predictors of what and how much people are likely to know at a given time about a topic, but also how interested in and motivated they are to learn anything about that topic, which is the definition of *cultural literacy* according to Hirsch (in Grossberg et al. 1998:339). With regard to cultural aspects, many people learn from other people rather than the media, which reinforces the classical opinion-leader theory (see also 3.2.2 and 3.2.5).

The notion of the mass media, being cultural machines and forming a cultural industry, was first conceived by the Frankfurt School, a group of intellectuals, in 1923. Members of this school, amongst others, were Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Fromm and Benjamin, whilst Habermass later continued the traditions of this school. Adorno and Horkheimer devised a Marxist sociological approach to media studies at the then New York-based Institute for Social Research. They saw the media mainly as a cultural industry that maintained existing power relations and served to lessen the "resistance

standards" of cultural purists by popularizing certain forms of culture. Their critique was based on the fact that the masses are "narcotisized and duped by the banality of the mass media content", affecting their ability to function efficiently as citizens in a democratic state by this replacement and ceaseless consumption of culture or cultural products, or even both (Nuttal & Michael (eds.) 2000: 49; Sardar & Van Loon 2000: 34).

The cultural studies approach (cf. 2.5.5 to 2.5.7) to the media is represented broadly by the Culturalist School or tradition which has its roots in literary criticism, film theory and social critical theory (McQuail 1992: 13). There are apparent and confusing extensions with sociology and psychology on the one hand, and with the traditional human sciences on the other, but according to Dervin (in McQuail 1992) it has established a secure and challenging position in the discipline of communication studies. Should one examine the main focus areas of this "School", it has four dominant concerns:

- an engagement with and commitment to social issues, particularly from an oppositional, critical and sometimes even populist stance;
- an emphasis on ritualistic, expressive and consumatory version of communication [as opposed to instrumental and utilitarian views];
- a critical concern with the text in the form of the particular content as it is experienced, and therefore also with methods appropriate to textual decoding according to the theories of structuralism and semiology; and
- an interest in the relation between the reception of texts with the audience and the socio-cultural context in which the media operate, resulting in preferences for ethnographic methods.

This School's rejection of objective and scientific procedures in matters of culture and meaning [communication] implies that the approach to research and education is mostly qualitative and interpretative in nature (McQuail 1992: 15). To the supporters of this perspective and approach, media texts in itself do not have real meaning before it has not been received and interpreted by the audience, changing the focus from the media to the audience's performance (see communication 3.2. to 3.2.1). The qualitative nature has a negative implication in the sense that it is difficult to convey research findings to anyone outside of the communication and media studies

community, most probably as a result of the subjective findings and complex interrelated arguments. This main concern of these scholars lies in trying to explain and understand communication experiences and behaviour.

As a generalization, there seems to be a world wide consensus about contextualizing media education within the frameworks of the British inspired cultural studies, an interdisciplinary approach to the construction of knowledge, which problematizes texts and foreground representations of gender, race and class. A survey of more than 100 Canadian teachers who were teaching media in Ontario found that the biggest problems facing these English teachers who teach media, were cultural and elitist expectations and typical English classroom practices, putting the media into the context of mythological studies of Joseph Campbell, for instance, uncovering ideological bias and media manipulation (Pungente 1994).

Bill Walsh (1996) was very explicit when he said that "increasingly, media literacy is tied to cultural literacy. One simply cannot be a literate and aware citizen of our culture without knowledge of the mass media". Cultural studies can and should serve an important function within the humanities by re-evaluating popular culture as a both pleasurable and worthy discourse and as a relevant social resource, labeling for example, television as a modern medium. The most elaborate argument for the liberating potential of popular culture has been made by Fiske (1989) , who tends to see the audience-public's pleasure in the media (as they now exist) not just as an oppositional stance, but as the first step in a process of social transformation. Cultural studies thus address the question of how social and discursive levels of structure are interrelated, which is one of the primary questions for research in the interdisciplinary field of mass communication (Jensen & Jankowski 1991: 29).

2.5 Media literacy and other forms of media-related fields of study

2.5.1 Media studies

It seems from literature as if media studies has had a long history in Europe, as well as in America. The initial link, however, was with the sociological approaches of literary and linguistic studies, while more recently it found a niche in departments of

English and Cultural Studies at various universities both in Europe as well as the USA. Communication and Information Studies only recently started focusing exclusively on the topic as something which is situated at the heart of mass communication studies, while social studies, humanities, general studies, arts and drama, as well as philosophy, have focused marginally on how readers/audiences respond to texts and what differences their readings have shown (see 3.2.3 for audience studies). Media studies in recent years have focused on the active role of mass media audiences in the process of creating meaning in the communication transaction and system, both at individual as well as societal levels. It seems from the related literature as if media education should precede media studies, the latter being taught at tertiary level and the former in primary and secondary schools.

Buckingham and Sefton-Green (1994: 131) suggested that it would be simplistic to suggest that there is one single definition of media studies. The trend amongst schools and teachers, not exactly knowing what to do with media studies as a separate entity, has been for the teachers to welcome it on board, and then to incorporate it along with other elements of other subjects such as English and Literature. Whatever the term may mean, it is clear from the Internet for example (cf. MediaStudies.com undated, aiming "to help advance research and education in media studies and critical thinking"; True Lies: Understanding Media undated; and another activist website titled mediastudy.com undated), that there are hosts of interested scholars in the issues and subjects offered under this umbrella word which is described as the current "coolest course" of study (Hiscock 2001).

If the assumption is correct that media education is a more comprehensive, integrating and complex discipline of study applying media education on primary and secondary school levels, it needs to be established what exactly the focus of study will then be in media studies. According to Lusted (1991: 32), media studies seeks to identify the ways in which meaning is socially produced, as well as the relationships between language and power. Rather than merely validating and recognizing the meaning in productions of students, they must also be able to analyze how these *meanings* are produced and question them in a critical way. Instead of asking "what does it mean?", the question must be "how does it come to have this meaning?". It also refers to incorporation of the study of the institutions which have the power and also control us.

Branston's and Stafford's (1996) book, simply called *The Media Student's Book,* merely declares that media studies is an established "area of work in many schools and colleges ... yet there are very few books designed to help students through a subject which both relates very intimately to the sharpest contemporary cultural pleasures, and has to draw on a range of difficult theories to understand these experiences". From this statement it can be deduced that media studies strongly incorporates the realm of popular culture, explained by means of specific media theories. These authors categorically state that the development of media studies has been driven by developments in higher education, where many academics have striven since the 1960s to get the modern media taken seriously as objects for study — but also had to do it in academic and specialized language (1996: 1).

According to Greenaway (in Forrest 1999), the placing of media studies within the arts framework in Australia is somewhat unique (Curriculum Profile for Australian Schools 1994). While media is taught within other subject areas (see 4.13) across the total curriculum such as English, media studies as a stand-alone subject is rare. In this country, media studies have a strong cultural and visual literacy emphasis. Greenaway (1999) argues that the categorization of media studies with art education offers the best opportunity for a pedagogy which is more conducive to the encouragement of active "hands on" learning approaches, offering learners creative expression opportunities and understanding of visual texts as conveyors of meaning.

Another rationale for media studies in schools have been to define it as a form of social and political education. It might on the one hand help people to become more aware of things that may happen to them, while on the other hand it makes people take note of what is going on in the world, according to student perceptions about media studies (Buckingham & Sefton-Green 1994: 141). These authors are of the opinion that media studies has developed so rapidly as a subject in its own right because it represents a challenging, contemporary version of "English teaching" that should be at the heart of the subject rather than a mere "bolt-on extra", and that media studies represents an "encounter between English and media education" (1994:6; see Chapter 4.13).

What is clear however, is that this young and dynamic discipline of media studies covers a vast area of the nature and characteristics of all the mass media; the economical and political rationales and dogma of the mass media; normative and

functional theories and effects of these "agents"; the role and importance of media audiences; how meaning is created in the different languages, texts, genres and formats of the various media; specific critical issues such as globalization, culture, feminism, censorship, violence and censorship, stereotyping and sexism. These studies also encompass contemporary media trends; the standards of reporting and news; the important role of the media in society and consequent cultural hegemony; and even mass media research (cf. Avery & Eason 1991: 8; Baran & Davis 2003: 223; Biagi 2003; Fourie 2001a (ed.): xx;). It is briefly summarized by Whetmore (1993) as *a study of the form, content and consequences of the mass media.*

The origins of media studies are situated in American mass communication studies that emerged in the 1930s. There was widespread belief at the time that new urban areas were populated by a mass of faceless individuals who were "rootless and deprived of certain social activities that previously existed", such as the presence of the family and strongly knit village communities (Sardar & Van Loon 2000:21). People were therefore perceived to be vulnerable to the mass media messages coming at them, even by scholars not related to the communication discipline. In North America specifically, *media studies* are known as *media literacy* which aims to highlight the importance of extending literacy skills beyond the traditional print media, to visual literacy in particular.

There seems to be further confusion about the terms *media edu*cation and *media studies*, united in the verb of "teaching" the media. According to Hart (1997: 12), media education can be seen as a watered-down version of media studies, whereas the latter is broader in scope but maybe not as powerfully focused as media education on the prospect of studying the mass media on its own, rather than merely applying as a tool and instrument in teaching media environments. Media education, according to Greenaway (1999) from Australia, concerns itself with the understanding of how we arrive at the meanings we do, by identifying such influences as our own cultural backgrounds, the contexts in which we read the images and the experiences what we all bring to the readings. The fact that media texts can convey implied and latent meanings and so reinforce dominant ideologies, is also central to media education.

Occasional references and literature focusing on so-called "new media studies" and "new media literacy" also cropped up (cf. Covington 1997; Gauntlett 1995; Kaplan

2001; see also 2.4.3). These authors all argue for a literacy of new media, and state that the problem of literacy, as such, is more than a mere question of reception and a tendency to "separate container and content, medium and messages" (Kaplan 2001). The magnitude of the new media environments — generally highly technological and digital in nature — is much more comprehensive than the print media or sound media and therefore also require more comprehensive and advanced skills, than standard or traditional literacy.

The birth and growth of the so-called new media, mostly digital in nature, apparently necessitated a revolutionary new look at the existing frameworks of media studies, which gave rise to scholars pursuing the field of study of "new media", "new media literacy" and even "e-literacy" (cf. Gauntlett 2000). The impression exists that the mass media, including media producers, products, practitioners and scholars, became so universal and certainly one of the most profitable and ubiquitous industries, that academics and critics were not the only sophisticated authorities on the media anymore. Media producers and their products became multi-layered, and theory did not suffice anymore, but rather called for practical approaches and relationships with the media. This is where the concept of media education for grass-roots people, such as parents, youth leaders, teachers and the general consumer entered the media studies scenario (see 5.11). Brown (1998), quotes Reneé Hobbs, as she says that "[i]f we can help parents and teachers teach new consumers skills young people need in order to navigate this media-saturated environment, we are providing a valuable service" — teaching skills, which can obviously be applied to all communication forms.

2.5.2 Media education

Media education aims to increase learners' awareness of the many forms of media messages encountered in their everyday lives, and it should help them recognize how the mass media, including advertising jingles, public service videos, news reports, amongst others, filter their perceptions and beliefs, shape popular culture, and influence personal choices. Media literacy, on the other hand, rather seems to involve critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills (see 4.7 and 5.6) to make students judicious consumers and producers of information (Quesada 2000: 49). Media education — as used in the United Kingdom — refers to the process of teaching media

literacy (as it is known in Canada and the USA), and media studies in Australia. In the United States alone, there exists many different perspectives on how to media educate the youth, but not all of these agree on to what extent youth audiences are active participants (undated, retrieved on 18 March 2002 from the Internet).

Successful media education must involve an empowerment of learners which can be applied to the creation and sustaining of an active democracy and of an empowered public who cannot be manipulated by mere command, but whose opinion counts on media issues exactly because it is critically informed and capable of making its own independent judgments (Masterman in Hamelink & Linné 1994: 312). The chief rationale of media education seems to be the liberating aspects, since there exists a perception of the media rather as weapons used in the service of powerful interest groups, than as bastions of free expression, sharpening the class, ethnic and gender divides. At a conference in Vienna during April 1999 on "Educating for the Media and the Digital Age", facilitated by Tyner and adopted by Unesco (see also 3.4), media education, being "part of the basic entitlement of every citizen in every country in the world and instrumental in the building and sustaining of democracy", was defined and described as:

- dealing with all communication media from the printed word to moving images and sound delivered by any kind of technology;
- enabling people to gain understanding of the communication media used in society, and the way they operate to acquire skills in using these media themselves;
- ensuring that people learn how to analyze, critically reflect upon and create media texts, identify sources and their various interests and contexts; interpret the messages and values offered by the media, select appropriate media for communication of own messages or stories and reaching their intended audiences, and gain or demand access to media for both reception and production purposes (see 4.9 for latter perspectives).

While the delegates at this above-mentioned conference recognized the disparities in the nature and development of media education in different countries, they also felt strongly that media education should be introduced wherever possible within national curricula as well as in *tertiary, non-formal and lifelong education* (which supports the

primary goal of this thesis in terms of the development of a model for South African tertiary education; cf. Chapter 5.4). The delegates specified that media education should address a wide range of texts in all media which provide people with rich and diverse cultural experiences, and should assist people to recognize the potential of the media represent/misrepresent their cultures and traditions. Where countries battle with access to electronic and digital technologies, media education can be fully achieved on available media texts. It must at all costs aim to empower all citizens in every society and has a critical role to play in situations of social and political conflicts, war, natural disasters and ecological catastrophes, to name but a few (Unesco-Vienna Conference 1999; see 3.4).

Lusted (1991: 1) coupled the phrases of *media education* and *media teaching* under one umbrella term named *media studies*. "The recent increase of interest and activity in teaching about media ... makes it harder to chart overall provision. All this suggests that teaching the media is now a growth industry. But what kind of industry is that? What are the ideas that constitute its "raw material"? (1991: 2). Although teachers have used the media as stimuli or teaching aids for many years, an isolated subject in which the media — not merely as the carrier of information needed in class for another subject — being studied as standing on its own, is a recent development.

From literature one gets the impression that, up until the early 1980s, the most common solution to the conceptual problem of how to make sense of so many media, and genres within these media, was to approach it from the starting point of the uniqueness or specificity of each medium. It seems as if there were more frequent and widespread meetings and conferences, while continuities and correspondences began to emerge out of the most diverse range of practices and contexts. One apparent result was that television is playing a much more dominant role in their thinking and practice than it had ever done in the past. It seems as if the most important spin-off of these gatherings were that the media never present reality — they reconstruct and represent reality.

Media education may empower students to raise questions about the role of media in processes of social conflict and historical change, ideally also outside the particular forum of reflexivity that education represents. Meta-communication — media education in essence — may promote a critical awareness of the ends and means of

mass communication in society. What media education may produce is an audience with a difference (Green in Jensen & Jankowski (eds). 1991: 225). Eventually the process of meta-communication should feed back into the media through various forms of public debate. Media professionals as well as professional researchers should also become engaged in such dialogues. The groups involved, according to Green and Freed (2003), should be educational institutions, community groups, media workers and researchers (see 5.8).

In the world/s of media literacy and media education, there are two main schools of thought about "teaching the media", of which one is adamant that there should be a separate course of study in media and media literacy. The other view is that media literacy — just as text literacy — should be part and parcel of every subject in every department and in every course (see 4.13). Just as reading is required in science, mathematics and social studies as well as in language courses, media literacy should be a part of every subject in very grade. The latter is a more inclusive view of the various kinds of media that saturate our daily lives.

Media education seems essentially to be an exploration of contemporary culture (see 4.10.1), alongside more traditional literary texts and communicated via the mass media. A media education programme will deal with fundamental questions of language, interpretation and meaning. Such a programme seeks to increase students' critical understanding of the media. Interests include the way media work, how they produce meanings, how they are organized and how audiences make sense of them (Prinsloo & Criticos (eds.) 1991: 11). This definition originated from the British Film Institute in an attempt to delineate a very complex area. The exploration of contemporary culture immediately brings to mind non-specific and various topics with many educational issues such as language, critical thinking, history and life-skills.

One of the approaches to media education has propagated learning about and through popular culture as a result of the relationship between education and culture (4.10.1). The increasing popularity of media education is, of course, a response to changing circumstances. In promoting this broader reconsideration of literacy, researchers and academics constantly return to metaphors of reading and writing not in terms of instrumental skills, but rather regarding literacy as an act of individual cognition within

a wider set of social practices and relationships (Buckingham & Sefton-Green 1994: 213). These authors maintain that:

> [u]ltimately, media education itself will also need to be redefined. It will need to move beyond its traditional focus on texts and pay closer attention to the ways in which texts are socially circulated and used. Media studies (like English) will need to become part of a broader discipline, one which might be termed *Cultural Studies* (cf. 2.4.5).

In view of the enormous ideological importance of the media (Masterman 1985:6), media education became an urgent necessity, and he even emphasizes that media education is a matter of "life and death", corresponding with the perspectives of Barthes who claimed that the media, by means of its mythologizing propensities, communicate ideological abuse. A media education programme will deal with fundamental questions of language, interpretation and meaning which can increase students' critical understanding of the mass media. It needs to be thought of as a specialist field in its own right, but also as an element that will need to inform the teaching of all subjects. Media education should be thought of a lifelong process, within which many agencies, institutions and individuals will have important roles to play (Masterman 1985:241).

Most of the prominent scholars and academics are however concurring that it is extremely complicated to make conceptual sense of a field which covers such a wide range and diversity of forms, functions, practices and products. Another prominent media educator, Hart (1997: preface), equates the phrases of media education and media studies, except to say that in good media education, theory and practice constantly interact — presumably to form the subject of media studies. He stresses the fact, however, that media education should be more than a call for education as "civil defense" (1997:1) (also see Chapter 3.6.5 for civic outrage and civic courage).

Greenaway (in Forrest (ed.) 1999) admonishes scholars and students of media education, particularly in the United States and Australia, not to get too "hung up on terminology ... [but] to look past the educational labels toward the desired outcomes of media education and then to generalize over several emerging fields or sub-fields of study." It is clear from related literature that many academics and scholars have strong inclinations to precise terminology, and elementary and secondary policy

documents, while this array of different words convey essentially the same concept of media literacy. A reason for this search for precise terminology may be in view of the fact that media education is a relatively young study field to teachers, and additionally it is associated with many other terms such as visual literacy, communication education, media arts, information literacy and competencies. Essentially, media literacy seems to be indicative of a conventional perspective about literacy as a specific and obtainable commodity instead of as a lifelong process of learning which should start at a young age, when people begin to interact with the mass media.

2.5.3 Media teaching

Australia, Israel and various other European nations rather use the term "media education" to describe the concept of critical analysis and production of media, springing from the earlier approaches of literary criticism which emphasized the value of helping young people to discriminate between works of so-called high culture and that of popular culture. "As early as the 1960s, British and Australian educators advocated media education, noting that "[w]e need to train children to look critically and discriminate between what is good and what is bad in what they see" (Halloran & Jones in Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett 1992: 12).

Walsh (2001) says that each time an elementary teacher shows a film or an art teacher introduces a new medium into class, or the kids bring "current events", there is media education going on. To the extent the differences among these various media are discussed or explored in class, there is already media literacy going on. It seems however from available literature that there is no distinct difference between the terms of media education and media teaching, but that it merely comes down to a preference for the one or the other phrase. Teaching the media clearly refers to media education, while media education implies teaching about the mass media. The question then, however, arises what media analysis would entail.

2.5.4 Media analysis

When asked about his original spark leading to his interest in the media and his opinions of the effects of the mass media upon culture, McLuhan replied: "I find media

analysis very much more exciting now simply because it effects more people than almost anything. One measure of the importance of anything is: Who is affected by it? In our time, we have devised ways of making the most trivial event affect everyone. One of the consequences of electronic environments is the total involvement of people in people" (McLuhan & Zigrone 1995). This remark points to the emotional and affective involvement of people in the media (see also 3.2.6), thus emphasizing a development of affective and emotional skills to be used when dealing with the media content. It seems though as if the phrase of "media analysis" was mostly applied by McLuhan and his contemporaries. (Incidentally, it seems as if the albeit debatable popularity and influence of McLuhan is being revived, as scholars appeal to the media world "to bring back Marshall McLuhan" whose importance is greater than ever (James & Moriarty undated, retrieved 16 May 2003).

2.5.5 The cultural studies paradigm

Giroux (in Pungente 1994), American educator and critical pedagogy advocate, pointed out that "critical educators need to take up culture as a vital source for developing a politics of identity, community and pedagogy ... viewing culture as a shifting sphere of multiple and heterogeneous borders where different histories, languages, experiences and voices intermingle amid diverse relations of power and privilege". According to Giroux (in Grossberg et al. 1991), cultural studies offers a theoretical discourse for a new cultural politics of difference, pedagogy and public life. Central to this task is the need to develop a discourse that accentuates the organic connections between cultural workers and everyday life on the one hand, and schooling and reconstruction of democratic public culture, on the other". New movements such as cultural studies bid us to return the text to its interaction with the context that gave it birth" (Grossberg et al. 1991).

The function of cultural transmission is one of the least understood and estimated functions of mass communication. It is difficult to finally establish whether the mass media create culture or merely reflect culture, though researchers' findings point to both of these as true. The two levels of the contemporary and the historical always interweave and are inseparable. On the contemporary level, media constantly reinforce the consensus of society's values, while continually introducing the seeds of

change. The mass media are indeed simultaneously the conservator of the *status quo* but also the medium to create change (Biagi 1988:13; cf. values education in 4.7.3).

It is evident that there is a symbiotic link between culture and the mass media content, regardless of whether the mass media create or reflect culture. Potter (2001: 325) and Freed (2003) are two of the staunchest believers in the necessity for and importance of a broad base of knowledge, particularly about culture. Knowledge is a major tool in protecting media literate individuals from unwanted effects from the media.

> The broader and more accurate your knowledge bases are, the more you will be able to orient yourself toward positive effects and avoid the influence of negative effects. Knowledge serves two functions in this process: an orienting function and a confirming function. When we are not very media literate, the media control these functions. Being highly media literate means that we have shifted the control of these functions over to ourselves (Potter 2001),

Freed (2003) is even of the opinion that "anyone who is not media literate may perish" in modern times. This corresponds with the idea of media literacy as an empowerment of individual consumers in media audiences.

2.5.6 The culture industry

Popular culture has emerged as one of the main sites of investigation within the contemporary mass communication research and cultural studies (see 4.10.1). Most of these studies however focus on fictional aspects in the media, whilst the non-fiction media, such as TV-news and newspapers are in itself undoubtedly also extensions of popular features or genres of the mass media (Dahlgren & Sparks 1992: 1). Canadian media educator Duncan believes that:

> ... [o]nce teachers confront the popular culture of young people, they find media-generated issues are one of the best bridges to the world of their students. Since access to the media is egalitarian, and young people are its biggest consumers, teachers and students are on an equal footing. Particularly with general and basic level students, mutual media experiences may be their only common ground (in Greenaway 1999).

In an article on the web-site of *Transparency* (Seanes 1993), titled *Popular Culture is more moral [and less moral] than it is given credit for,* it is said that on the one hand

the media have been accused of providing "terrible role models, but that that is precisely its genius: it shows a caricature of the me-generation that many of us recognize". The youth and the electronic media today are dependent upon each other. The mass media need the youth for their economic survival and growth, whilst the youth depend on the mass media for guidance and nurture in a society where other social institutions, such as the family and the school, do not shape the youth culture as powerfully as they once did (Schultze, Anker, Bratt, Romanowski, Worst & Zuidervaart 1991: 12).

It is argued that culture is transmitted, not from parent to child, but from peer group to child. But the "language" of popular culture — "bare midriffs or bell bottoms, rap or acid rock dominates every conversation in the mall" (Lewis 2001: 23). The matter still prominently relates to the issues of media and cultural literacy "... as the rationality of the media becomes more and more engulfing, repressed ideas are making a comeback (...) at a time when the relationship between intellectuals and other social groups — the "people" — is in deep crisis" (Mattelart & Mattelart 1992: 102).

Gramsci, one of the researchers previously mentioned in this context, was one of the pioneers who saw the need for and "importance of an organic relationship between popular feeling and intellectual knowledge, between one group's practice and the other's theory" (in Mattelart & Mattelart 1992: 103). This perspective was confirmed in tests taken down from second-year and third-year media studies learners at the University of the Free State, where the wide gap between their general news knowledge and popular culture knowledge became apparent. The average mark for the general knowledge section — e.g. what is the Hansard reports? — came to 34%, while the results for the popular culture section — e.g. what is the slogan of Nike? — was an average of 86% (Pepler 2003 unpublished).

Grové (1999 : 54) describes how young people in particular, enjoy spending free time in the "malls" and how they will tell you how entertaining and escaping spending time can be to dwell in shops and look and desire (3.5.5). To buy, give many people unique joy and pleasure. Research, according to Grové (1999:54), has found that the heartbeat and blood pressure both increase just before a customer decides on a purchase of an item (compare also Chapter 3.2.3 and 3.2.6). It seems as if there is

also a certain fear incorporated in the excitement, and when the purchase is made, a kind of relief and satisfaction set in.

Mattelart and Mattelart (1992: 87), in a discussion about popular culture, quoted a passage by Pasolini, in which the problems with the mass media, creating a:

> mass hedonism is summed up quite well as the ... fever of consumption is a fever of obedience to an unstated order (...) the degrading anxiety of being like all the others in the act of consuming, being happy or being free, because such is the order that each person has unconsciously received and which he "must" obey if he feels different. Never has difference been such a terrifying fault as in this period of tolerance...,

implicating that television was the emblematic victor of this interclass culture of consumption.

Prominent media literacy advocate Thoman also relates how:

> little did I realize that the big box in our living room was not just entertaining me. At a deeper level, it was stimulating an "image" in my head of how the world should work: that anything new was better than something old; that science and technology were the greatest of all human achievements. I believed it because I could see it — right there on television (1992).

It is possibly this search for "something-more-that-what-we've-got-now" that is at the heart of the consumer struggle the world finds itself in today. The consumer culture however, could never have emerged and prospered without the invention of the camera and the eventual mass-production of media images it made possible.

2.5.7 Media culture, mass culture and popular culture

While one of the results of the postmodernism movement implied a rejection of the distinctions between so-called "high" and "low" or popular culture, it also resulted in a capitalistic phase which is associated with multinational and consumer capitalism and an emphasis on marketing, selling and consumer commodities associated with electronic and digital technologies.

Kellner, for one (1995:34), was unhappy with the term and notion of popular culture, as he felt that it is ideologically loaded and would blunt the critical edge of cultural studies. He suggested another term for studies in this realm, namely *media culture,* stating the advantage of signifying that our culture is a media culture, that the media have colonized culture, that they are the primary vehicle for the distribution and dissemination of culture, that the mass media of communication have supplanted previous modes of culture like the book or the spoken word, that we live in a world in which media dominate leisure and culture.

It seems, however, as if the term "popular culture" is mentioned far more in cultural studies literature, and is the term most literacy researchers are currently using in their work involving critical media literacy to address questions of audience engagement such as who does this text address through its words, images and sounds? Who is absent in the text and what might explain that absence? Whose interests are served in this text? How am I positioned by it? (Alvermann & Hagood 2000a: 200; see 4.10.1 for teaching popular culture teaching approaches).

It would appear as if popular culture always concentrates on what is referred to as the youth genre, where television, popular music and other electronic media provide the discourse, themes and styles that become increasingly important in middle childhood and adolescence. Inviting popular culture into the classroom does not have to result in pushing explicit instruction out of the curriculum. Rather, opportunities to learn school discourse become richer and more productive when the popular culture texts that students experience outside the classroom are welcomed in and serve as a kind of meeting place where affectively charged learning can occur (Alvermann & Hagood 2000a: 201). Levy (2002: 22) indeed says that the first step in media literacy is to recognize the effect and influence of popular culture on aspects of one's own life — "would we have been different people if we existed in another culture?", he asks.

The traditional mass media such as magazines and television are not the only and major carriers of mass messages, however. Everyday life, says Fiske (1989: 47), is constituted by the practices of popular culture, and is characterized "by the creativity of the weak in using the resources provided by a disempowering system while refusing finally to submit to that power. The culture of everyday life is best described through the metaphors of struggle or antagonism", and these clashes of social interests are

primarily motivated by the pleasure of producing one's own meaning of social experience and the pleasure of avoiding the social discipline of the power-block. A prominent media literacy organization, the *Media Awareness Network* (2001), defines popular culture{PRIVATE} as the arts, artifacts, entertainment, fads, beliefs and values that are shared by large segments of society (see also 2.5.6).

Some researchers and authors claim that the power of the media is primarily situated in the creation of an undemocratic political system, where everyone thinks like the mass culture which is propagated. Individualism and creativity are becoming scarcer in school, because there is already a globalized media culture based on the culture of the West (Ewen 2000: 439). Even more importantly is that the new communications systems, such as the Internet, will increasingly put more value on brands. "What's hot – whether a product, a personality, a sporting event, or the latest financial data – will attract greater rewards. The costs of producing or promoting these commodities will not change, but the potential market will increase greatly. That will create a category of global super-rich, many of them musicians, actors, artists, athletes and investors." (Cairncross 1997: xii).

Popular culture, according to Barry Duncan from the Media Literacy Resource Guide, Ontario Ministry of Education (1989:14–19), means inclusion of some or all of the following:

- popular culture and trends;
- the coverage of royalty;
- the appeal of the current rock megastars [e.g. Madonna];
- pop culture's fascination with rituals [e.g. Harry Potter];
- the nature and power of celebrities;
- fashion TV;
- fast-food happiness which conveys the idea that these eateries and foods bring happiness by solving all one's problems;
- fads such as pet rocks, Pokemons and most diets;
- the appeal of shopping malls;
- the culture of toys such as Disney and Hollywood;
- the appeal of cult film patterns in teen films e.g. horror, sex and violence;
- formulas in best sellers and romance novels;

- the pop culture of the fifties and sixties (e.g. Rocky Horror Picture Show and Art Deco).

Fourie (1997: 175) broadly sees the following as some of the products described as popular culture: popular films, television, pulp literature, pop music, the popular video industry, comic strips, posters, all genres and formats in general entertainment offered by the mass media. Popular culture, according to Fourie (1997: 175), "is seen as the product and direct result of technologisation, industrialisation, urbanisation and commercialisation ... known by the fact that it is produced in bulk by a complex and multibillion dollar industry ... which aims to sell itself to the masses for mass consumption ... popular culture in today's society is, therefore, purposefully produced as a product, with mass consumption envisaged." Fourie (1997: 176) concludes by saying that popular culture is centrally and corporatively produced for private consumption by members of the mass society, is accessible to all and enters the private domain (as McLuhan has also observed), is characterized by rhythmic and cyclical mass production based on style and fads for profit-driven reasons, and it is lastly recognized by its secular nature.

Popular culture, created and serviced by the mass media, is possibly the single and most important influential factor which shapes young people's perception of the world and the identity of their selves. An increasing number of educators believe media literacy is essential because it is the means by which the dominant culture is sustained and it is the source of much of our knowledge. The omnipresent media implants ideas, expectations, concepts, aspirations and images in our minds without us even being aware of attending to their messages and implications (Greenaway 2000). Shepherd, president of the Association for Media Literacy, is of the opinion that:

> popular culture is a debased version of high culture that has its roots in a class-based society which elevates a particular canon of literature or art to a privileged position. For better or for worse, media culture is our culture and we cannot hope to own it without understanding (undated, retrieved on 13 December 2001).

Even three decades ago — before the real and accelerated technological revolution in the mass media — it was remarked by De Fleur and Ball-Rokeach (1976: 164) that one of the most challenging issues of the mass media is their ability to "survive and for long periods of time provide their audiences with content that powerful elites have

regularly condemned as being in bad taste or even downright dangerous. A continuous dialogue has been carried on between the representatives of the mass media and these self-appointed representatives of 'high culture'". They continue by taking it back to history as far as before Christ, quoting Plato as he said that "[i]t seems, then, if our first business will be to supervise the making of fables and legends, rejecting all which are unsatisfactory, and we shall induce nurses and mothers to tell their children only those [tales] which we have approved ... Most of the stories now in use must be discarded" [undated, online]. It can be assumed that this statement also relates to the establishment of a new-value order system by means of globalization.

Alvarado et al. (1987: 21), in one of the ground-breaking text-books on media literacy, *Learning the media: an introduction to media teaching,* quoted the *Newsom Report* of 1963 on *Popular Culture and Personal Responsibility*, stating that

> [t]he culture provided by all the mass media, but particularly film and television, represents the most significant environmental factor that teachers have to take into account. The important changes that take place at the secondary stage are much influenced by the world offered by the leisure industry which skillfully markets products designed for young people's tastes.

The mere fact that children and young people in general spend so much time with the media, makes it self-evident that the media must exert a powerful influence on young people's thinking about the word. This statement clearly relates to the need for the inclusion of the popular mass media content and media literacy as teaching units in schools.

In the above section, it became clear that the teaching of media literacy can never be separated from the larger contexts of the mass media content, and its majority of popular taste messages. An elitist perspective of popular culture, not being academic or scientific enough for teaching classrooms, will have consequences in terms of young people not being equipped with skills and knowledge surrounding the mass media, with which almost all people have extended contact. Should media literacy be viewed as an outcome and product of teaching, the larger fields of media studies, cultural studies and popular culture as a communication phenomenon have to be included in education about the media.

2.6 Motivation for media literacy education

While the motivation for media literacy education was stated in more general terms in the previous chapter, specific statements by leading media literacy advocates and scholars will now be provided concerning reasons why this field of teaching and study has become so imperative.

2.6.1 Mass exposure of (young) people to a flood of media messages and formats

Although all media literacy teachers and experts have their particular and specific reasons for the need for media education, these rationales often overlap. Against the background of all these convincing arguments petitioning for media literacy, the list of Len Masterman from the United Kingdom, one the foremost media literacy pioneers in the world, seems structured and rational. His compelling reasons for media literacy implementation (1985: 1–17) are briefly mentioned here, while he notwithstanding emphasizes that there is no "once-and-for-all set of answers to the question 'why teach the media'?".

- **Media saturation.** Considering that a large amount of people's media exposure is not planned and purposeful, it is easy to think it is not absorbed in a conscious fashion, and that these people do not even notice their interaction with the media messages in question, e.g. in a shopping mall with its own radio station, urging shoppers to look for specials. One should not only think in terms of deliberate and planned exposure however, but rather also about all the hidden and subliminal "interactions" with media messages in the culture around us. There is no way to avoid all the mass media messages surrounding individuals in a media-drenched society.

- **Media influence.** The ideological importance of the media and their influence as consciousness industries, creating mass culture and group pressure cannot be underestimated (see media hegemony 1.9, 2.5.5 and 2.5.6).

- **The manufacture and management of information.** The growth in the management and manufacture of information and the consequent dissemination by the media are realities that should be dealt with. The matter of globalization should also be added to this aspect.

- **Media education and democracy.** The increasing penetration of the mass media into our central democratic processes affect all people, possibly creating many faulty beliefs and stereotyping in society.

- **The growing importance of visual communication and information.** The importance of visual communication and information in all areas. The latest innovation (September 2002) of *SABC2* and *Sanlam* whereby an educational programme, *Takalani Sesame,* is broadcasted to many rural young children without schooling and books, can serve as example. (At the time of going to print, this same programme has been judged in France as the best children's programme in the world (Volksblad 2003).

- **Education for the future.** The importance of educating students to meet the demands of the future is critical. Many children are very informed and even computer literate, but this does not mean that they are equipped with life-skills in the realms of communication, socialization, relationships and decision-making. They can at the most be described as being "streetwise", but not emotionally well-developed.

- **Growing privatization of information.** The fast-growing national and international pressures to privatize information also correspond with trends and calls for globalization and media monopolization by large conglomerates.

A South African scholar, Du Toit (1994:26 – 44), contributed to the above-mentioned debate centering on potential detrimental effects of the media. He mentioned the following reasons why people should teach their children to watch television vigilantly and with care.

- Television is a time-waster and trespasser in the private lives of the family and the individual;
- Television only supplies what the masses demand ;
- Television mainly broadcasts the stereotyped and trite recipe of American culture ;
- Television is inclined to oversimplify very complex issues and matters ;
- Television depict stereotypical and one-sided portrayals of reality ;
- The commercialized nature of television ; and

- Television is an instrument of propaganda, climate-setting and ideological indoctrination.

None of these debates are thus either new or have not been addressed already since the inception and development of the mass media, and very often these issues are talked about in many households, friendship circles and educational spheres without a possible solution. Families regularly claim that the quality of communication and interaction have improved dramatically when the television is banned from the living-room. This is a typical example of a abolitionist view of the media (and more specifically television in this case), overemphasizing its bad points and not mentioning the good functions and benefits arising from the media at all. (It may seem as if the above reasons were actually also the aspects the previous South African government offered when they unilaterally decided during the sixties that television will have too negative an influence on the country's [white] citizens and their culture in a time when television was already part of the daily lives of people in other countries.)

The mere fact that there are such a multitude of magazines, newspapers, movies, radio stations, television channels, compact discs computer programs and the Internet to choose from at any given time of any given day, makes it very difficult to opt for a media-free life. Our inability to process all the messages coming at and past us will lead us to form faulty beliefs as a result of our availability, active exposure and passive exposure (c.f. Potter 1997; Potter 2001: 25).

One of the primary "fears" driving the quest for media literacy is the corruption of the audience by a counterfeit culture created by the mass media. It is becoming clear at this stage that many scholars believe that mass media education can possibly ensure protection for impressionable young minds against this "cultural disease" (Masterman 1990: viii) and "puppet masters" of the uneducated masses" (Freed 2003). It is thus comparable to an inoculation or prevention program to safeguard consumers against the affects of lengthy to television and movies.

2.6.2 Mass media create mass culture

This matter has been discussed in the previous section under popular culture (Chapter

2.5.7). Cynthia Peters (1998) concludes that it has always been clear that no matter how much parents de-emphasize TV, or avoid the malls and the Disney stores, children will be hit hard by all the corporations that want them to consume their products and their values. She says further that "[w]e cannot protect kids from all the media messages, but we can empower them to be critical. We can make them 'media literate'".

With reference to specific particular media, David Bianculli (1992:148) quotes film critic Molly Haskell, as she wrote in 1991 already: "Long after they proved themselves the twentieth century's most important form of mass entertainment, movies have become our common cultural touchstones. Even films and genres that were once dismissed as escapism are now seen as revealing windows on our lives and times, without losing their charm as pop pastimes. Movies have given us a common language that unites people. If you don't want to be out of it, you'd better learn to become cinema literate" (see 3.3.14).

Ross (1995: 235) has mentioned in this regard that "mass-communicated messages aimed at the mass audience will have little persuasive effect, if the members of that audience fail to talk to one another about the message", which is a clear indication of the socializing and bonding effect of the media as creators of mass society and mass culture. One cannot help but speculate to wonder at how many dinner tables – if dinner is not eaten in front of the television in the living room – conversations revolve around active media events and news developments, such as *Big Brother* and *Survivor* or the sports items during week-ends — while the masses have the option and choices to accept the media as our "Big Brother or seductive coma" and become educated (Freed 2003).

In spite of the fact that people actively seek out certain messages in order to fulfill particular needs and actively other unwanted messages (cf. uses and gratifications theory in 3.2.5; Baran & Davis 2003:265; Branston & Stafford 1996: 313; Severin & Tankard 2001: 293 – 300), there is always a threshold to how active a person can be in deciding what to expose him or herself to and what to avoid:

> It illustrates a phenomenon of the times – the inundation of America by a rising flood of entertainment, to such an extent that millions have become waterlogged.

> (...) most of our amusements, recreations, regalements and revels represent avenues of escape, and not always from the harsh realities of life, from intimations of mortality, from a sense of void but often from boredom. The average man gets his living by such depressing devices that boredom becomes a natural state to him (Corwin in Biagi 1989:17).

This addictive quality of the media again comes under scope in the following chapter in the section (3.2) on the mass media and its contents, and the audiences' relationships with these agents of culture.

2.6.3 Mass media create faulty beliefs and stereotyping

The mass media content that we come into contact with, very often create faulty beliefs and stereotypes (see 3.3.8), and once people are settled into specific paradigms of thinking, it is very difficult and hard to rid themselves of these entrenched perceptions. If someone just habitually float along in the stream of mass media messages and unquestioningly accept most of the content and images in these formats, there cannot really be any mention of media literacy (Potter 2001:27).

Constant exposure to media content affect the way consumers think about themselves and society in the world at large. It also touches on our beliefs about many aspects such as gender, class, religion, crime, families, sex and values (see 3.5.8). If a person's exposure is passive, the mundane details in the media content exert their effect without the person even being aware. The question is asked once again how people can gain control over the development of our knowledge structures, over the formulation of opinions and the shaping of our fundamental values. "How can society's leaders become more careful in the formulation of our opinions and thus reduce faulty beliefs?" asks Potter (2001: 38).

It was stated by Walter Lippman, American psychologist and philosopher, that "for the most part we do not first see, and then define; we define first and then see". In the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the outer world we pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture (Clark & Blankenburg 1973: 41 – 43).

From social conversations, it seems as if people now find it often problematic to conceive how the previous South African government could have upheld the apartheid system for so long under so-called rational and thinking people with cognitive reasoning skills. It can also be speculated that it would not have been possibly without the support and intervention of the mass media by means of repetition of stereotypical messages. This is one of the potential biggest benefits of media literacy: the stimulation of critical thinking by the perpetual asking of questions, for example about the media industry and its ideology and contents.

Enzensberger (1974) summarizes this by saying "[]that the media are making possible mass participation in a social and socialized productive process, the practical means of which are in the hands of the masses themselves. Such a use of them would bring the communications media, which up to now have not deserved the name, into their own. In its present form, equipment like television or film does not serve communication but prevents it. It allows no reciprocal action between transmitter and receiver; technically speaking, it reduces feedback to the lowest point compatible with the system". Media literacy, in turn, has the potential to enhance the pleasures of the media, as the communicator and receiver (consumer) can now be on equal footing.

2.6.4 Morals and societal values suffer

Thoman, executive director of the Center for Media and Values in Los Angeles and early activist in the media literacy movement, justifiably asks: "How do we instill [in children] moral values of justice, selflessness and understanding when the mass media bombard them with images of instant gratification, violence and greed?" (see 3.3.1 to 3.3.15); (undated, retrieved on 7 December 2002). Thoman disseminates educational kits that help children interpret, analyze, and evaluate the images, words and sounds that make up our contemporary mass-media culture (cf. Appendix B for Thoman; 4.9 for educational packages). Another Catholic activist, Violette, has been sending newsletters to numerous stake-holders to teach critical thinking, particularly on issues of sexism, consumerism, and parenting, relating these themes to more general issues of faith and values more central to daily life (Peters 1998). (The South African *Aida Parker Newsletter* doggedly persists in the education of critical questions to be asked by the average voter about politics dished up to them.)

There is indeed evidence in literature where media literacy, without naming it as such, is practiced in the development of new values and societal norms. The well-known *lovelife* campaign which is prominent in the fight against the rapidly-spreading Aids figures in South Africa — and which attract ample interest from other countries — is an applicable case study. The chairman of this lovelife-campaign, Dr Sinclair (from the United States Kaiser Foundation), claims in an interview [online] that today's 15-year old South African is as likely to be exposed to the modern media as the average youth in the United States or any other developed country, with South Africans having "a very highly developed media environment and a very sophisticated media infrastucture" in terms of the African continent. The most profound influence over the past ten years has been the tremendous increase in access to television as 95% of all households now have electricity. "The most watched show by South African teenagers is the *Bold and the Beautiful",* claims this *lovelife* organization, who spends millions of rands on their controversial sexual health campaigns (undated, retrieved on 3 March 2003).

2.6.5 Generation X and Millennial Kids prefer the mass media as friends

Codrington (2001; Fourie & Codrington 2003) has done extensive research on the distinguishing characteristics of the present different generations in South Africa and the world-at-large. He drew specific conclusions from his research regarding the so-called GenerationX's and Millennial Kids — current teen-agers and young adults who have been born during the 1970s to 2000. This generation is certainly lacking in terms of traditional heroes, in which place they rather have celebrities. The typical millennial "heroes" are actors, multi-million dollar performers and sports stars whose claim to fame is popularity rather than heroic acts of intrinsic value. This happens, while most celebrities actively promote a destructive lifestyle, but tell young people not to follow their example. This is not to suggest that the heroes of generations past were not human or never made mistakes, but rather that the acts that conferred hero status onto them were acts of value or benefit to society, rather than the ability to manipulate the media to gain publicity. Pop stars have become the religious icons of today.

According to the Collins dictionary (1999), an icon is a figure representing Christ; a symbol, a representation, anybody or anything uncritically admired, but this term is

often used to describe popular culture stars, who symbolize enhanced value rather than functional value. Functional value is where something is important for what it is; while enhanced value is when something has a value placed on it that is beyond the true value of the object. In a consumer society, functional value has little importance. In the past specific actions caused people to become famous, while today people become famous for who they are and not so much for what they do. Pop stars such as Madonna have indeed become the new role models in society to whom many young people look for instructions on how to act or dress (see also 3.3.15).

2.6.6 Critical thinkers absent in the Information Age

The media literacy movement aims to equip children with skills they need to critically view commercial media content and become better consumers, and other programs also teach children how to use and produce various mediums themselves. According to the Aspen Institute Leadership Forum on Media Literacy (1992) and the Canadian Association for Media Literacy (1998), the process gives children the abilities to "access, analyze, evaluate and produce communication in a variety of forms".

The latter remark also refers to the declining ability of children and young people – in fact most people – to apply critical questioning and thinking to all information and messages that they encounter. At first glance it seems as if the educational system has focused to a large extent on a regimen where learners are expected to accept what is fed to them by "knowledgeable" teachers and authority figures, lest they be accused of being rebellious. The Afrikaans school system, having had its roots in the Calvinistic ethos and nationalistic approach to life (Oosthuizen 1996), produced too many people never challenging the *status quo* or authority figures for fear of being scolded as insolent and ill-behaved, or being ridiculed.

Another reason which could contribute to the almost vegetative state of mind that many people apply to their interaction with the mass media, relates to the developmental stages of the human being (see following table of Potter 1997:13, 14). According to Potter in this section, the *Developing Scepticism* stage occurs between about ages 5 to 9, and the *Intensive Development* stage follows shortly after. Many people remain in the last phase for the rest of their lives, as this stage is fully functional and people feel they choose their exposure to the messages and media they want, and

get the meaning they want from that exposure. They perceive themselves to be fully literate, and that they cannot learn anything more about the media.

This researcher, however, differs in some respects with the findings in this table, as I sincerely doubt the capability of a 3 to 5-year old child to distinguish between true and false in complex situations such as motive-action-outcome; many historically media-deprived students in my classes apparently have not mastered this technique fully). Too many people in comfort zones, who live lives of quiet desperation as Thoreau (1997) proclaimed, prefer not to develop critical opinions and social responsibility. The table is, however, insightful with reference to possible media development skills.

Table 2.1: Adapted from *typology of media literacy* (Potter 1997: 14,15).

AGE	STAGE	CHARACTERISTICS
1st year of life	Acquiring fundamentals	Learn that there are other human beings and other physical things that look different and serve various functions. Learn the meaning of facial expressions and natural sounds. Recognize shapes, form, size, color, movement and spatial relations. Learn rudimentary concept of time-regular patterns.
Years 2 and 3	Language acquisition	Recognize speech sounds and attach meaning to them. Able to reproduce speech sounds. Orient to visual and audio media. Make emotional and behavioural responses to music and sounds.
Years 3, 4 and 5	Narrative acquisition	Develop understanding of differences: Fiction vs non-fiction Ads vs entertainment Real versus make-believe Understand how to connect plot elements: By time sequencing By motive-action-consequence
Ages 5 to 9	Developing skepticism	Discount claims made in advertisements. Sharpen differences between likes and dislikes for shows, characters and actions. Make fun of certain characters even though those characters are not presented as foils in their shows.
After 9	Intensive development	Strong motivation to seek out information on certain topics. Develop a detailed set of information on specific topics e.g. sports, politics. High awareness of utility of information and quick facility in processing information judged to be useful.
Connoisseurs of media	Experiential exploration	Seek out different forms of content and narratives. Focus on searching for surprises and new emotional, moral and aesthetic reactions.

Asking only what is best for me but rather for society	Critical Appreciation	Accept messages on their own terms, then evaluate them within that sphere. Develop broad and detailed understanding of historical, economic, political and artistic context of message systems. Develop ability to make subtle comparisons and contrasts among many different message elements simultaneously. Develop ability to construct a summary judgment about the overall strengths and weaknesses of a message.
Asking what is best for society	Social responsibility	Take a moral stand that certain messages are more constructive for society than others; multi-dimensional perspective based on thorough analysis of media landscape. Recognize one's own individual decision have impact on society. Recognize that there are some actions that the individual can take to make constructive impact on society.

In the same vein, Lewis (2001:23) is convinced that the current challenge for parents and educators is to lead children beyond the shallow poses sold by the media to the processes of a truly engaged life, and he states as such:

> It is after all, the capacity to think deeply and independently that will lead to true accomplishment and the clearest expression of who they really are. One way to accomplish this is to put the media and the values of consumption back into perspective for children, not by attempting to police access, but by resigning from our chaffeur assignment and reclaiming our role as the most truthful storytellers.

Lewis here (2001: 23) captures media education and training in a nutshell. Media literacy is indeed not blaming the state of the world on the mass media and it is also not a disease — whether physiological or emotional — against which people should be protected. It is however a means to address the growing commercial nature of societies, the corruption of literature and language and the multiplication of low-taste media content.

2.6.7 Media literate citizens can select media content without being cloned

Media literacy is important in the sense that we all live in a media-saturated world where we are continually bombarded with messages from newspapers and magazines, film and television screens, Internet websites, chat rooms and list-servs. People need to know how to filter out what they do not need and want and how to access and then interpret, analyze and evaluate what is useful. Media literacy seems

to be about asking critical questions (see 5.6) and then making informed choices; it is about using the media selectively and reflectively; it is lastly also about the enhancement of the media. Media literate people try to establish who the source of a message is, what is its purpose and the source's [communicator's] credibility and reliability. Media literate people can recognize bias, distortion, stereotyping and sensationalism — of which there all are abundant examples in the mass media. Media education develops critical thinking skills, fits all areas of the curriculum and can be integrated into every subject area (Trampiets 2000a).

Gombrich (in Potter 1995: 4) verbalizes the above sentiment quaintly as he says that:

> [t]he power of visual impressions to arouse our emotions has been observed since ancient times ... Preachers and teachers preceded modern advertisers in the knowledge of the ways in which the visual image can affect us, whether we want it or not. The succulent fruit, the seductive nude, the repellent caricature, the hair-raising horror can all apply on our emotions and engage our attention.

This closely connects to the great psychologist Carl Gustav Jung's findings on the collective unconscious, which are dormant in all people regardless of their culture of birth or origination (cf. Singer 1994).

Estés (1993: 19, 21) may have pinpointed one of the reasons, if not the most important, for mankind's fascination and fixation with the mass media. The media bring stories to us all and the genre of stories is far older than the art and science of psychology (cf. Hollis 1995; McAdams 1993). "Stories set the inner life into motion, and this is particularly important where the inner life is frightened, wedged or cornered. Story greases the hoists and pulleys, it causes adrenaline to surge, shows us the way out, down, or up, and out of trouble, cuts for us fine wide doors in previously blank walls, openings that lead to the dreamland, that lead to love and learning, that lead us back to our own real lives ...". Knight (2002) also emphasizes the importance to tell stories when reporting news in the media.

With reference to this thirst for stories, it may, however, also be argued that there is a risk related to only living in a mediated-story world, as people can forget how to live their own journeys. From this one of the earlier-mentioned long-term consequences can surface: how will parents educate children about culture if they do not have a

cultural identity themselves, but have taken it over from the mass media, which can globalize and promote one large mass culture?

2.7 Benefits and positive outcomes of media literacy education

Silverblatt (see Appendix B; 1995; 1999), arguably one of the most prominent pathfinders in the media literacy world, isolated seven "principles" which rather reads as outcomes of media literacy education or training (1995 online). Silverblatt maintains that the greatest advantage of media literacy is the aspect of empowerment. By empowering both children, teenagers and adults (by means of citizen's bureaus as can be found on a large scale in Canada), the average citizen in a society becomes empowered to strengthen the democratic structures of the society that it serves via many avenues, i.e. by:

- challenging the naturalness of media images;
- asking questions of representation;
- examining the democratic structure of broadcasting institutions; and
- raising questions of human rights in relation to communication.

In order to comprehend the value of media literacy education, it is important for the educator, as well as learner, to take notice of these so-called principles of Silverblatt (often labeled as the initiator of media literacy), which rather seem to this researcher as ensuing *benefits* resulting from the teaching of the media.

Principle 1: Media literacy empowers individuals to make independent judgments about their media consumption, and do away with the indiscriminate use of the media.

Individuals who study media literacy can develop a critical distance from content which they receive through the media, in order for them to become able to make independent choices about what to watch, read, or listen to. To become media literate, individuals have to assume responsibility for the media content they become exposed to and consume (see transactional communication in 3.2.1).

Principle 2: Media literacy focuses attention on the elements involved in the media communication process.

Successful media communicators understand the communication process; recognize the purpose of the communication; are self-aware; understand the message and know what they want to say; understand the characteristics of the channel used to communicate; can identify their audience; and apply the avenue of feedback to ensure that the audience comprehends the message (see 3.2 for communication and 3.2.1 for transactional communication).

Principle 3: Media literacy fosters an awareness of the impact of the media on the individual and society.

As media literacy focuses both on the impact of the media on society and individuals as well as the nature and characteristics of the mass media, specific societal issues can be addressed by learners such as privacy on the Internet, libel, pornography, intellectual property etc (see 3.5).

Principle 4: Media literacy develops strategies with which to analyze and discuss media messages.

Media literacy involves critical thinking skills that enable individuals to decipher information conveyed through various media channels, which develops skills in learners for the systematic analysis of media messages contained in any media presentation, including those available through Internet technologies (see 5.6 for critical thinking discussion).

Principle 5: Media literacy promotes awareness of interactive media content as a text that provides insight into our contemporary culture and ourselves.

An understanding of culture can furnish perspective into media messages. Questions which learners will be able to develop, could be: "What kind of culture or cultures populate this virtual world? What kinds of people populate this world? What is the ideology of this culture? What does it mean to be a success in this world? How does a person succeed in this world? What kinds of behavior are rewarded in this world? What embedded values can be found in productions on the Internet?" (see 4.8.3 for values education and character-forming).

Principle 6: Media literacy cultivates enhanced enjoyment, understanding, and appreciation of media content.

Media literacy is not about media-annihilation and media-criticism in a negative sense, but is applied in order to enhance the interaction with the media and thus the benefits people may get from these content. Because learners become aware of negative effects and techniques, they will be able to apply these knowledge contents and skills to production in turn (see 4.10).

Principle 7: Media literacy challenges interactive media communicators to produce effective and responsible media messages.

An awareness of the mass communication process as well as a fundamental knowledge of basic production techniques and processes can be developed. Media students are becoming aware of the important role they, as future communicators and producers of mass media content, can play in producing content that also serve the public interest and not only financial profit (see 4.4 for teaching approach).

2.8 Conclusion

It is clear that the impetus behind the media literacy movement originated from the growing influence of the mass media, and the consequent need people have for the contents of these media. It can also be concluded that the current pervasiveness of the mass media in modern societies necessitated new research into the relationship between the mass media and that of the mass audience. The earliest effect studies were prompted in a time when there were fewer mass media formats and genres. It was unavoidable that questions and concern would develop from the unrelenting growth of these media and the consumers' growing dependency thereon (see 3.2.3).

It became clearer to mass communication scholars that there indeed exists a certain symbiotic connection between the mass media — being a product of well-educated mass communication producers — and the captivated mass audiences who increasingly relied on the media for many functions and diversion (see 3.2.4 and 3.2.5 for more literature). Concerns started to grow about the increasing overload on the audiences of mass-mediated information and messages. The need for media education or media teaching became imperative.

There is a definite link in scholars minds about the link of traditional literacy on the one hand, and cultural and media literacy on the other hand. As the mass media are the primary carriers of culture in society, the definition of literacy had to be extended to encapsulate the exploding world of popular and mass culture. The fact that good reading skills are not a condition for the reception of the mass media content, does not imply that the communication process is functional. This realization led to the movement of media literacy as an extended form of literacy.

In this chapter, the search for answers to the conceptual research question has revealed that a multiplicity of views and statements, and even variations of media literacy exist. This explains the ambiguity of what someone means when he/she talks about the importance of media literacy — whether this person is now talking about teaching how to use media, teaching how to make media, teaching about media, teaching how to interpret media, or teaching about understanding media affects. The fact that media literacy seemingly also embodies the study of fundamental issues in society such as the growth of popular mass culture, the decline of critical thinking and individualism in the face of wide-spread conformity, the weakening standards of moral and societal values, and stereotyping, also led to scholars placing an importance on media literacy as a potential teaching of life-skills and values.

Making sense of the media is a process in which individual and collective identities are defined and negotiated. In making meaning, and in establishing our own tastes and preferences, we are simultaneously defining the meaning of our own social lives and positions, and which is characterized by a considerable degree of diversity and complexity. The focus of media literacy apparently takes communication and mass media theories one step further by not focusing on either only description and explanation, but rather a direction of reform in the form of empowerment in terms of consciousness, knowledge and skills in the consumer.

Several scholars argue that media studies has obviously become a measure by which various psychological, sociological, political and economical, as well as philosophical, issues could be put on the agenda for learning. The fact that the study field now became so comprehensive, caused confusion with reference to final definitions for media studies, media education and media teaching, media literacy and other related

disciplines such as cultural and information literacy. The mass media cannot be separated from the fabric of society and literally pervades every sphere. This underlines the crucial need for media studies and consequently a concept such as media literacy, but the history of the media literacy movement evidently testifies of the many questions about where and when to start, and what precisely to include in this new "curriculum", of which the importance cannot be denied.

When pleading for a wider and more inclusive definition of literacy and curricula that is responsive to the changing cultural competencies of young people in the late 20th century [and early 21st century], "we cannot afford to remain tied to a unitary, inflexible notion of 'media literacy'. On the contrary, we need to ensure that we are able to engage with those radical and diverse notions of reading and writing that are emerging from current social and technological changes" (Buckingham & Sefton-Green 1994: 213).

The terminology of media studies and all its different tenets in terms of media teaching, media education, media literacy, cultural teaching and literacy, and even information literacy in the face of the astounding growth of computer technology, necessitates the answering of various critical questions. Matters such as the following entered the literature and are still being asked: "What exactly should be the learning contents of these subjects, at what stage should this type of teaching commences, can it be accommodated in the teaching of other subjects, should the learner also produce media products, and most critically, how should these disciplines be taught?"

The term media education itself should also be redefined, especially in view of all the connotations that the term has acquired from a variety of disciplines, which can benefit from the inclusion of such a subject in any school curriculum. It will need to move beyond its traditional focus on texts and pay closer attention to the ways in which texts are socially circulated and used — the driving forces and values underlying the mass media industry. In this context, the specialist study of particular media will need to be located within the broader study of cultural processes: media studies will need to become part of a broader discipline which might rather be termed cultural studies. Any such development or design must be based on the understanding of and interaction

with the mass media from the perspective of "everyday" competencies and theories that students develop through their own cultural experiences.

Against the background of the ambivalent and equivocal content of the mass media, an ideological leaning towards media literacy as a *social and societal phenomenon* resides within many of the specific theoretical perspectives aiming to engage students in the analysis of the mass media and audiences. Assisted by explicit practical methods endeavouring to promote skills and the mapping of subject positions, media literacy, despite all the differences and debates, can become cause for celebration rather than division. It should also assist students to experience the pleasures of popular culture, while simultaneously uncovering the codes and practices that contribute to silence or disempower them as readers, viewers and learners in general. Media literacy can supply people with vital life-skills, becoming responsible citizens in the contexts of their communities and society, particularly that of a democracy where critical-thinking and –speaking constituents are vital to the welfare of the state, and the actualization of the constitution and people's rights.

In the following chapter, the current state of affairs regarding media literacy as a teaching phenomenon, both on an international and local footing, will be examined and compared against that of media literacy in South Africa. The question can indeed also be asked whether South Africa needs media literacy education at all in view of the fact that it forms part of a developing Third World continent. Various of the major individual role-players and organizations in the various countries, where media literacy is an implemented school subject, will be investigated. Media consumption figures in South Africa will be studied, and potential beneficiaries of media literacy in South Africa will be listed.

Chapter 3

Exploring and describing the current state of affairs regarding media literacy as a teaching phenomenon

In this chapter the following aspects will be discussed:

- Communication studies as originating context of media literacy
- Key debates on mass media content in the media literacy domain
- The current international state of media literacy as field of study
- Prominent international media literacy pioneers and organizations
- Media literacy teaching in South Africa

> Shall we just carelessly allow children to hear casual tales which may be devised by casual persons, and to receive into their minds ideas for the most part the very opposite of those which we should wish them to have when they are grown up? (Plato 456 BC).
>
> Think about it. If another adult spent five or six hours a day with your kids, regularly exposing them to sex, violence and rampantly commercial values, you would probably forbid that person to have further contact with your children. Yet most of us passively allow the media to expose our kids routinely to these same behaviors — sometimes worse — and do virtually nothing about it (Steyer 2002:5).

3.1 Introduction

When operating in the qualitative research paradigm where the nature of the study is non-empirical, exploratory and descriptive in character, the inclusion of a meta-analytical research question is imperative. This meta-analytical research question, according to Mouton (2001: 54), usually focuses on the *state of the affairs regarding the subject under investigation* and the *key debates in the domain of the subject under focus.* It may also refer to the *leading positions/paradigms in the subject-related research,* which is investigated.

Exploratory-type questions such as these can often examine an unfamiliar area of research as well, which can contribute to *the identification of consequences of communication problems* (Du Plooy 2001: 48). In this particular study, the meta-analytical research question thus converges in terms of:

- the leading communication contexts and perspectives from where media literacy can be explored, studied and taught, e.g. communication, transactional communication, audience studies and propaganda (see 3.2);
- the key mass media debates in the media literacy domain, particularly with reference to media effects (see 3.3);
- the state of media literacy as current field of study, both internationally, as well as in South Africa (see 3.4 to 3.6); and
- potential role-players and beneficiaries of media literacy education in South Africa (see 3.6.7).

The procurement of media literacy can never be separated from the broader context of communication studies, the mass media and the various premises discussed in this chapter. These aspects are all fundamental to the comprehension of the phenomenon of media literacy, specifically where this thesis is chiefly concerned with the teaching of

media literacy as an outcome — *how* to balance, digest and counteract (if and when necessary) specific effects and consequences of the mass media content, particularly those negative and detrimental in nature on individual users, communities and society at large — and how to navigate the entire media environment.

Once again, it is accentuated that media literacy, as envisioned in this thesis, does not strive to deal in a strictly academic and theoretical manner with a comprehensive study of the media — thus contributing to the tertiary discipline of media studies — but rather focuses on the *general content of the popular media* and the *average media consumer's relationship with these media*, where grassroots citizens can be empowered by means of media literacy education in various contexts. An excellent example of media literacy for media consumers is Van Nierop's book, *Seeing Sense* (1998: vii), in which he emphasizes his own attempt to introduce film-lovers, scholars and film students (forming part of courses on the art of cinema at several technicons and universities) to the joys of analyzing films, moving away from a formal theoretical document on film analysis. The book is also meant to be enjoyed by non-scholars, to prove that "cinema is the most powerful, and perhaps most exciting, art form of the twentieth century ... [and] that one needs certain easy-to-follow and simple guidelines without getting entangled in theoretical intricacy to appreciate films". Van Nierop aptly refers to the concept of "cinema literacy", which also means "enjoying a film while taking it apart" (1998: vi).

Supporting this point, Gauntlett (1995: 99) makes an apt remark as he reports about his two young children who "clearly thought they [television commentators] were necessarily stupid and unable to tell the difference between television and the real world. This condescension permeates much research into media effects, which often reflects the researchers' dismissive attitudes both to television content and its audiences. The answer, I guess, is in the halls of academe, certainly not in my neighborhood". He (1995: 99) is extremely critical of "the researchers' élitist and disrespectful stance towards television viewers, and their deliberately failed attempt to apply a 'high culture' usage model to education [which] is not only patronizing, but also shows a degree of ignorance and contempt for popular television and its audience". He also suggests that it might be appropriate to look upon the history of television effects research as an extended *moral panic* — an issue raised by other scholars such as

Gerbner (1995) as well. These views once again contribute and emphasize the importance to focus on popular and mass culture in the discipline of media literacy as discussed in the previous chapter

It is therefore necessary to take a closer look at the individual and societal messages carried by the mass media, and to which the audiences and consumers ascribe their own meanings during the process of communication (in 3.2), as these are the arenas where the need for media literacy become manifested. The key purpose of media studies in the communications discipline is to reveal the *social* consequences of the structures and processes of the mass media, because "the production of media messages is a battleground for powerful interests ... to reveal how social ideas are produced and developed, and who benefits or is damaged by the dominance of some systems or belief" (Philo 1999: ix). This sentence embodies in large part the rationale behind the need for media literacy education.

3.2 Communication studies as originating context of media literacy

The previous chapter focused on the relationship of media literacy to other fields of study, such as media studies, cultural studies and popular culture, as well as the meaning of media literacy next to others forms of literacy, such as conventional literacy, visual literacy and cultural literacy. This was done in order to better understand the phenomenon of media literacy. It is necessary, however, to also look at the general context of media literacy within the larger framework of communication studies. For the sake of a better understanding of the complex phenomenon of media literacy, several aspects will be discussed in this section, which also focuses on literature arguing for the incorporation of some fundamental communication knowledge components in any media literacy curriculum or course (see model in Chapter 5.4). All learners ideally should develop a better understanding of this particular field of study, and the need for media literacy against a background of some elementary communication and mass communication learning matter. The contents of this section will therefore only briefly allude to basic aspects needed for media literacy education.

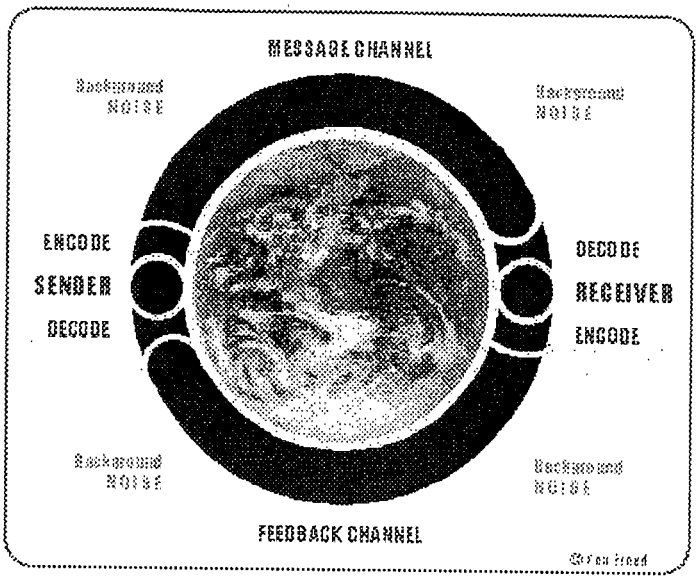
During the late 1940s, Harold Lasswell, recognized communications researcher,

proposed that the basic components of the communication process can be identified in one well-worded question: "Who says what, on which channel, to whom, with what effect?" (in Whetmore 1993: 8). This statement heralded the official start of communication studies from a social sciences perspective, and to this day remains known as the *Lasswell formula* (McQuail & Windahl 1993: 13). Included in the process are two additional processes or phenomena, namely that of *encoding* (composing/structuring a message on the sender's end) and *decoding* (deconstructing a message at the receiver's end).

Only when a person knows about the ideal, or even standard of something, can he/she begin to compare that which he or she is exposed to, against this benchmark. When someone knows that communication ultimately is about the successful sharing of meaning, he or she can begin to comprehend the "non-communication" practices of the media. It has been said that "[c]ommunication is the 'essential human connection'. Whether in pictures or music, whether verbal or nonverbal, informative or persuasive, frightening or amusing, clear or unclear, purposeful or accidental, person-to-person or mediated, communication is our link to the rest of humanity. It pervades everything we do" (Montagu & Mason 1979 in Gamble & Gamble 1989: 40). However, all these messages or information should at least answer to a standard — the sharing of meaning.

Communication is the act or process of transmitting (sending) information, ideas and attitudes (contained in messages) from one source to another. Communication takes place on many levels or situations. Mass communication occurs between a communicator (the source, e.g. the newspaper staff and owners) and its receivers (e.g. the readers of the newspaper). In today's world, with limited time, stressed people and millions of information messages — of which many are seemingly constructed in a haphazard manner — potentially subjected to masses of interfering aspects or noise, the ideal of communication, namely the *sharing of meaning,* suffers. Freed (2003) uses the following figure to illustrate the importance to understand the interactiveness of communication.

Figure 3.1: The interactive nature of communication (Freed 1993 [online]).



The following similarities between communication as a process with specific functions, and those of the mass media, emphasize why an inclusion of some knowledge components on communication is vital (Rivers, Schramm & Christians 1980).

- Communication and the media helps us watch the horizon in terms of news bulletins or commercials.
- Communication and the mass media help us respond to the challenges and opportunities on the horizon to reach a consensus on social actions.
- Communication and the media transmit the culture of societies.
- Communication and the media entertain us.
- Communication and the media sells goods and services.

3.2.1 The transactional nature of communication

The earliest models which endeavoured to capture the dynamic process of communication in a linear and one-directional manner originated from technological engineers Shannon and Weaver (McQuail & Windahl 1993), who worked with transmitters and technical communication channels. The transmission model saw the so-called communication partakers in the oversimplified message-sharing process as isolated individuals, while contemporary communication researchers have come to include many significant other factors as well. Naturally this linear view had many

weaknesses and insufficient explanations for the complexity of communication and its outcomes.

Shannon and Weaver's highly mechanistic model of communication can be seen as being based on a *transport* metaphor. James Carey (1989: 15) notes that in the 19th century the movement of information was seen as basically the same as the transport of goods or people, both being described as "communication". Here, Carey argues that "it is a view of communication that derives from one of the most ancient of human dreams: the desire to increase the speed and effect of messages as they travel in space." It is as if communication consists of a sender sending a packet of information to a receiver, whereas real communication is about *meaning* rather than information. The influence of the transmission model however is still latent in our daily speech when we talk of "conveying meaning", "getting the idea across" and "transferring information", or even "connecting with others".

The transmission model fixes and separates the roles of sender and receiver. Communication between two people involves *simultaneous* sending and receiving, verbally and nonverbally. In Shannon and Weaver's model, the source (sender) was seen as the active decision-maker who determines the meaning of the message; the destination (or receiver) being a passive and non-participating target.

In view of the fact that all communication theories deal with the dynamics of human interaction, new developments came to the fore, asking typical questions about effects and relationships. Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson proposed an interactional pragmatic theory, which is still influential in the field today (in Wood 2001: 167). Another such development was the *systems theory* and perspectives, which sprung from the psychological discipline, and specifically from Von Bertalanffy (Wood 2001: 169). This approach emphasized that all parts are interrelated, that systems are organized wholes, the whole is more than the sum of its parts and that equilibrium is seldom achieved.

Another new approach to the dynamics of audience/text relationship was suggested in

the uses and gratification model. In this model, theorists were not asking how the media effects audiences, but how the audiences were using the media. It suggested that audiences have specific needs and actively turn to the media to consume various texts in order to satisfy these needs. The audience in the uses and gratifications theories was seen as active, as opposed to passive audience in the effects model. The uses and gratifications theories acknowledged that the audience had a choice of texts from which to choose from and satisfy their needs.

Blumler and Katz (1974) stated four historical main needs of television audiences that are satisfied by television. These included *diversion* (a form of escaping from the pressures of every day); *personal relationships* (where the viewer gains companionship, either with the television characters or through conversations with others about television); *personal identity* (where the viewer is able to compare his/her life with the lives of characters and situations on television, to explore, re-affirm or question his/her personal identity), and *surveillance* (where the media are looked upon for a supply of information about what is happening in the world).

The uses and gratification model assumed that the audience's wish for satisfaction results in a media output to fulfil these desires, rather than acknowledging that audiences have to enjoy whatever is produced by the media. Both the effects and the uses and gratifications models ignored to some extent the audience and their social backgrounds, how they form their interpretations of the media messages and their specific relationship with the media text. Media literacy advocate Andrew Hart stated that "...the meaning is not in the text, but in the *reading*" (Hart 1997: 165). Emphasizing audiences in this way implies that the media are not as manipulative as they are thought to be. By understanding how the audience construct meaning and make sense of texts, producers can change their texts so that audiences will read whatever meanings the producers want. Ultimately, it is the audience's needs that control the output of the media, and thus also the content of popular media and culture.

The view that the partakers in the communication process should be equally empowered and equipped to encode and decode the messages, established the transactional perspective on communication. "Communication development is viewed

as a transactional process that involves a developmental interaction *vis-a-vis* the communicator and the receiver. This perspective emphasizes the reciprocal, bi-directional influence of the communication environment, the responsiveness of communicative partners, and both parties' own communicative competence. For example, this model assumes that the increasing readability or clarity of the receiver's communicative behavior may influence the communicator's style and frequency of contingent responsiveness in ways that will further scaffold the receiver's developing competence during the transition to the sharing of meaning and optimal communication (Wetherby, Warren & Reichle 1998: 2). Without recognizing or naming it as such, this statement refers to media literacy on the part of the receivers, as Freed (2003) indeed confirms this by stating that "... we mold mass media as mass media mold us. Paying attention to the implications while using the media may help us see how we affect others with every transaction, how we create our private and public realities by our media choices, how our interactions spin the web of culture, how life is interactive".

Constantly shifting roles of senders/communicators and receivers/audiences and their simultaneous reciprocal response characterize this perspective. As a result of the highly developed techniques applied by media communicators and producers in order to sustain the medium financially and ideologically, the majority of media consumers are not really involved in the communication process, which should ideally aim to share meaning between the partakers. Ideally however, all communication partakers must picture themselves as both cause and effect, stimulus and response, sender and receiver – and will not isolate communicative acts by imposing beginnings and endings in what is an unending process (Windahl, Signitzer & Ohlson 1998: 86). The latter statement reflects the never-complete nature of media literacy, which grows on a continuum, and it also forces us away from blaming the mass media for all society's ailments.

The envisioned transactional nature of optimal communication requires both the communicator and receiver to interact equally in the process. When dealing with any communication matter, such as the mass media acting as a channel of communication between the media communicators and audiences, a specific perspective must be

applied from where the mass communication process can be evaluated by means of specific criteria. Schramm was one of the first media theorists who maintained that one could never thoroughly understand the mass media and its effects "until we know how their uses interact with people's daily conversations about what they read and hear. And we cannot understand the nature of media organizations, until we study how people working and communicating interpersonally, manage to create such media forms as newspapers, magazines, books, television and radio shows, records, or movies" (in Williams 1992: 154). When media users thus create their own meanings and emotions, it does not occur in a vacuum and as part of a one-sided process of message transfer, but rather as an inherent part of the communication process, transforming it to a transactional event between communicator and user or audience.

The transactional perspective on communication can therefore serve as a potential and workable point of view on mass communication and the mass media. This perspective and approach emphasize the active participation on the part of the receiver and succinctly embody the vision of media literate receivers and media consumers who can balance their media diets and interact selectively and on equal footing with media content and messages. This view on communication goes hand in hand with the departure from the earlier views of passive media consumers to the preferred approach of active receivers who can determine the outcome and meaning of media messages.

Gerbner (in McQuail & Windahl 1993: 8) incorporated a solution to the identified problems of selective perception, interpretation and retention of messages on the part of the receiver by underlining the transactional character of communication, and the dependence of any meaning which is acquired on the assumptions and foreknowledge of the receiver and the context in which communication takes place. McQuail and Windahl (1993: 8) summarized it all by stating that this development has to do with the *intersubjectivity* of communication, "since all communication involves more or less elaborate exchange and bargaining between senders and receivers". The result of communication consequently comes down to a matter of negotiation, and cannot be predicted in advance as the level of interaction and negotiation is difficult to determine. Transactional communication is more "two-way", reciprocal and interactive, and

requires that the receiver [mass media user] cannot remain passive anymore, but must become involved and active in all kinds of ways. According to Tubbs and Moss (1994:7) all people, whether they are communicators or receivers, change as a result of the transaction and communication taking place between the different partakers.

This perspective of transactional communication comfortably accommodates the vision of media literacy, since it involves the full participation, empowerment and feedback of both the audiences collectively as well as media users individually, in order to interact with the mass media and the mass communicator on an equal footing. The more the media message receiver and consumer can interact with the content of the communicator, the less will the media be able to determine the dominant culture and ideology of the masses.

It seems appropriate that any basic course in media literacy should at least acquaint the learner with the various functions of the media, even though diverse researchers and academics ascribe miscellaneous responsibilities to the mass media. A superficial examination of these functions and traditional "responsibilities" furthermore explains the almost magical allure the media hold for consumers. These explanations may serve as a form of introduction to media literacy education. What people understand, they can assimilate.

The above remarks underline the average citizen's susceptibility to all formats and genres of the mass media. A scrutiny of the above references almost leaves one to admit that the individual member of society and society-at-large cannot function without the media, as it fulfills vital societal, socialization and communication functions. Although the media has certain negative effects and implications, the positive role it can play in communication and society is potentially too valuable to be subjected to abolishment and censorship.

A central concept in mass communication, according to the Media Literacy Curriculum Model developed by Eddie Dick of the Scottish Film Council (2000, see model in 4.8.7), is the idea that all communication, and all discourse, are constructions of reality. Every description or representation of the world, fictional or otherwise, is an attempt to

describe or define reality, and is in some way a construction, a selection and ordering with the media (Shepherd 1992), a viewpoint supported by the statement of Enzensberger (1974: 95, in the preface).

Gamble and Gamble (1989: 11 - 12), in a simple and straightforward manner, state the ways in which the mass media — "the tools and instruments of communication that permit us to record and transmit information and experiences rapidly to large, scattered, heterogeneous audiences; as such they extend our ability to talk to each other by helping us overcome barriers caused by time and space" – can make life easier:

- They inform and help people to keep a watch on our world and serve a surveillance function.
- They provide consumers with the news, information and warnings they need to make informed decisions. It is imperative to remember though, that good news travels just as fast as bad news, and the rapidity of the dissemination can in itself lead to faulty communication. Mistakes, distortions and useless information are disseminated as speedily as accurate and useful information.
- The media set agendas and thus help structure people's lives. They schedule what society should talk and think about, and conversations therefore tend to be "media-current". It proceeds with climate-setting, giving specific perspectives on each and every event, and the range of analyses and evaluations people open themselves to, can affect whether or not they will be exposed to differing points of view and whether or not they will be in a position to evaluate all sides of an issue, before they take a position.
- The mass media help to connect people with various groups in society — thus they keep in contact with government and politicians, to keep a finger on the pulse of public opinion and align themselves with others whom have the same concerns and interests.
- The mass media additionally help to socialize people by teaching them about behaviour and values in direct encounters with other people. The portrayals of people in action help us assess what the preferred patterns of behaviour and appearances are. The media therefore teach norms and values.
- Media persuade people and in so doing, they benefit the originators of messages. Advertisers and marketers use the mass media to further their

persuasive goals and actions providing platforms for ideas and product advocates. In fact, the media do it so well that advertising income sustains and nourishes most of our media.

- The mass media in the first and last instance, remain businesses and industries that must stay profitable and are consumer-driven.

The above aspects already suggest why the audiences have such a need for and fascination with the mass media. Besides vital survival information, the mass media entertain by means of noteworthy television, films, music recordings, fiction books and many radio programs and magazines as well as video and computer games. Thus, people will always get relief from boredom, escape from the pressures of daily life, and obtain emotional stimulation and experience release.

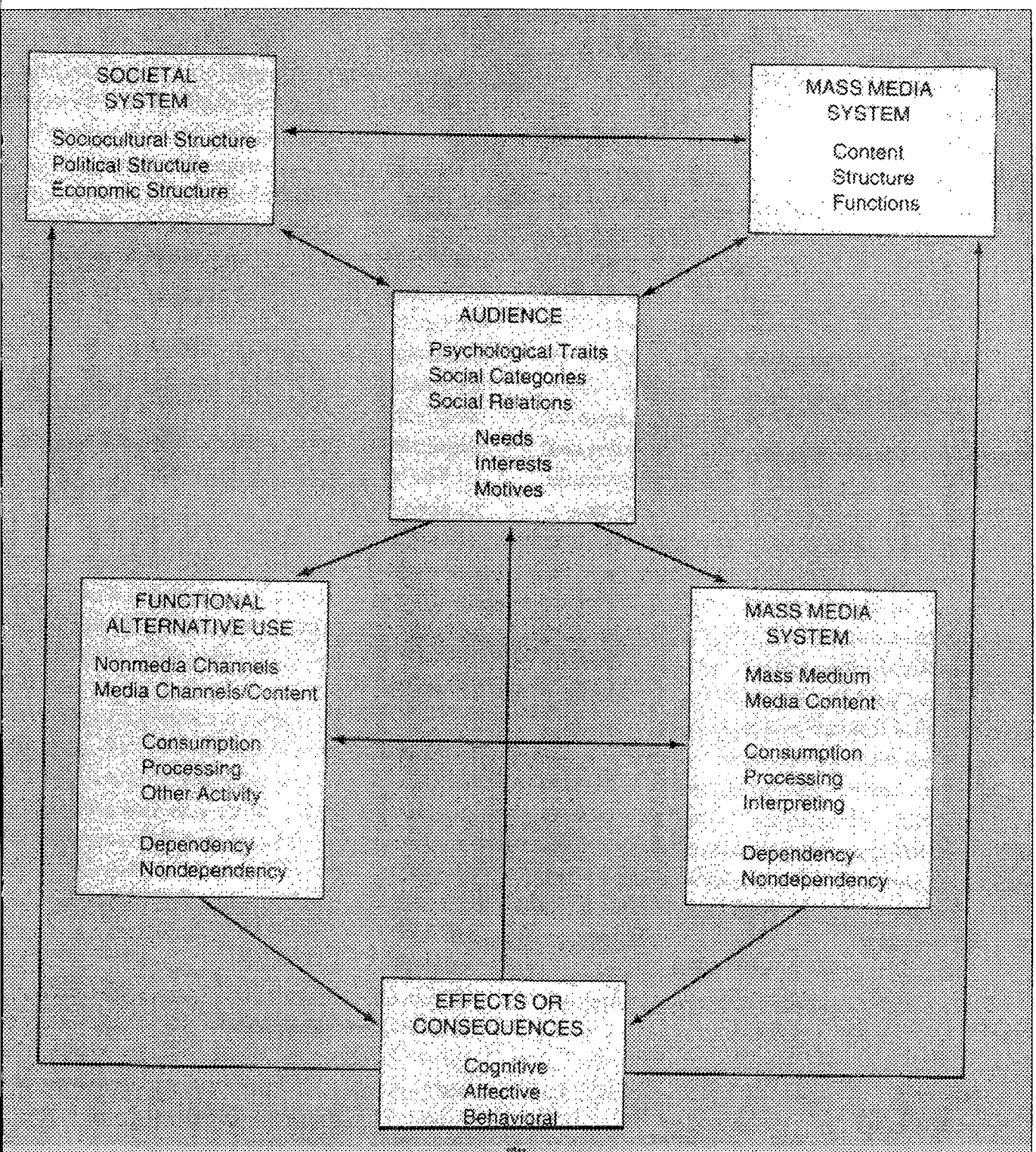
3.2.2 Mass communication and the mass media

The following functions of communication *de facto* correspond with that of the mass media: "Communication informs, entertains, provokes, instructs and persuades each one of us. Communication links us emotionally and intellectually to other individuals, groups and institutions. It is often defined functionally as "the sharing of experiences" of "the transfer of meaning or values" (Hiebert, Ungurait & Bohn 1991:5; see 3.2.1). Mention of the transfer of meaning and values between the communicator and receiver has serious implications for the mass media process and the consequent need for media literacy. Communication is a means to all those ends and it is, synergetically speaking, more than the sum of different parts. The general systems theory developed by Von Bertalanffy (1969) stated that the whole equals more than the sum of its parts, or "wholes made up of interdependent parts, the relationships between parts, and the relationships between the wholes and their environments" (Windahl et al. 1998: 83).

What is however vital for any media literacy learner, is the fact that the majority of the mass media are essentially consumer- and profit-driven businesses that operate from the basis of the principle of sales and survival, and keeping the advertiser happy. Therefore the mass media producers will certainly go to certain lengths to ensure a high circulation and sales figure, and in the process secure advertising revenue.

The term "mass" has its roots in the original theories of mass society from the 19th century. Hardt (in Boyd-Barrett & Newbold 1993: 5) illuminates how communication and media studies were transformed by their institutionalization within the academic worlds, where some researchers have had a desire for a scientific discipline, and others wanted a multi-disciplinary environment. All were, however, committed to an understanding of the processes of communication and its role in the structuring of a democratic society where the "study of mass communication can make sense only in the context of the theory of society" (Boyd-Barrett & Newbold 1993:6). This underlines the links between society, culture and media literacy (see cultural industry and studies in 2.2.5 and 2.5.7). Further to this remark, Silverblatt (1995:40) says that "we are all products of the historical events going on around us. Media communicators produce work that derives its significance from the events of the day", whilst underscoring the importance of knowing the mass context (referring to "those surrounding elements that subtly shape meaning and convey messages") in the teaching of media literacy. (The model on the following page (Figure 3.1) illustrates the complexity at work in the realm of society, culture, the mass media and multitude of effects and uses at play in this context.)

Figure 3.2: The Uses and Dependency model of Rubin and Windahl 1986 (in Littlejohn 1999: 353).



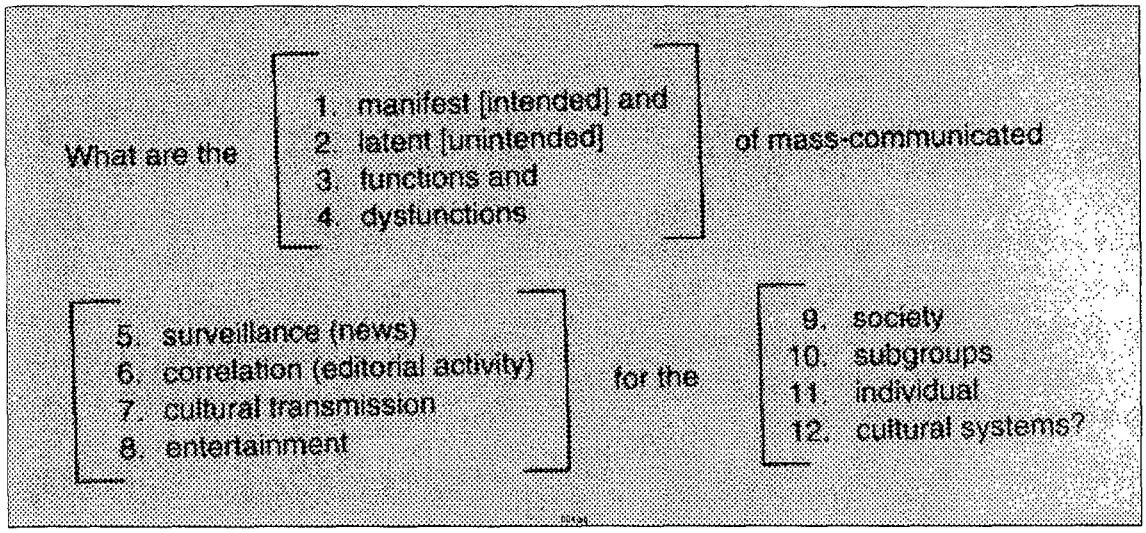
It is clear that there are many and various factors at play in the communication relationships:

- the larger society and its structures as framework or context for mass communication;
- the communicators or the mass media systems who have specific purposes in mind;
- the so-called receivers of the messages in the form of the audiences and their various and many needs;
- the functional and alternative uses of the above audiences or consumers; and
- the many effects of the mass media content in terms of cognitive, affective and behavioural consequences.

The work of Westley and Maclean heralded a new chapter in the transition from communication to mass communication studies, according to which the mass communicator and audience operate within a social context, and where the mass communicator acts as an agent for the receiver, being "an interpreter of needs and interests" which is guided by an anticipated audience demand rather than by communicator purpose (McQuail & Windahl 1993: 8). This statement refers directly to the elements of persuasion and potential manipulation contained in a large portion of consumer-driven mass media messages, which are aimed at changing the thinking and actions of its consumers. It also implicates the consumer- and profit-driven character of the mass media in most cases. The inevitable inclusion of the audience to the mass media context complicated – even distorted — the original and ideal functions of the mass media, together with the demands of running a sustainable business.

The following graph of Wright's functional model (in Littlejohn 1999: 339) explains this dilemma.

Figure 3.3: Wright's functional model (in Littlejohn 1999: 339).



Not only are various mass media and different genres with many latent, as well as manifest messages communicated, but are there also specific, but different functions for several stake-holders in terms of individuals, culture, subgroups (or cultures), all in the larger frameworks of cultures within society. All of these individuals may have different reasons and applications for these mass media messages, and also interpret it within a personal and individual framework, while still being parts of communities and societies.

It is noteworthy that Thompson (in Mackay & O'Sullivan 1999: 15) is selective about the use of the term "mass communication" in the new age of digital systems of information codification, as the latter creates a new technical scenario in which information and communication can be handled in more flexible ways. "If the term 'mass communication' is misleading as a description of the more traditional forms of media transmission, then it seems particularly ill-suited to the new kinds of information and communication network which are becoming increasingly common today". Thompson therefore chooses to apply other terms such as "mediated communication" or very simply "the media" when talking about mass communication. "What we now describe rather loosely as "mass communication" is a range of phenomena that emerged historically through the development of institutions seeking to exploit new opportunities for gathering and recording information, for producing and reproducing symbolic forms and for transmitting information and symbolic content to a plurality of

recipients in return for some kind of financial remuneration" (Mackay & Sulivan 1999: 15). It can be concluded that the current range of mass media, which includes digital and satellite communication media, used to convey messages to audiences and consumers, have increased considerably since the original mass communication studies.

Clark and Blankenburg (1973: 24) already classified the "mass communication machines" almost three decades ago by the following characteristics, which could be of importance when teaching the media to all learners who do not have a basic understanding and knowledge of the mass media:

- They permit a few senders [communicators] to transmit duplicate messages to many receivers at the same time.
- Mass communication machines are better at sending than receiving.
- The mass communication machine cannot reproduce everything that happens.
- These machines require lots of money.
- It requires skilled managers and technicians.
- The machines require considerable financial support, which responsibility in the end lands with the audience for the benefits they receive from it.

The very fact that it is stated repeatedly in related literature that these mass communication machines – all forms and extensions of the mass media – are essentially profit-driven, is critically important in the context of this thesis and study. The mass media, as far as knowledge and experience go, normally do not exist as a result of a higher calling of serving the masses. Sporadically an alternative form of a mass medium, such as liberation and opposition newspapers, are encountered, but in many of these cases history proves that these media cannot survive in view of the extreme costs involved in running and producing a mass medium for a small and select alternative target market.

Potter (1997: 197), renowned leader in the field of media literacy, says that "[t]he framework of [the media literacy learner's] knowledge structure about the mass media industries should be that there are nine major mass media industries: book, newspaper, magazine, film, recording, radio, broadcast television, cable television and computer. Each of these industries was born out of combination of technological developments that made its channel of communication possible and a mass marketing orientation that drove it, as an industry, to provide messages for as large and broad and audience as possible". It was however mentioned earlier that there are various other mass media such as billboards, product packaging, the music video industry, promotional items and arcade games.

The mass media are recognized by competitiveness, size and complexity, industrialization, specialization and representation (Hiebert et al. 1991:41), all in excess forms in the current third millennium with its abundance of technological and digital devices. This makes the rhetoric and product of mass media one of a corporate character, shaped by economic competition and resources. The growing tendency toward globalization and monopolization of the media is proof of this fact (cf. Baran & Davis 2003; Biagi 2003; Severin & Tankard 2000). It is important to note that, given the enormous industrial complexity of today's mass media, the mass communicator has difficulty being an individualist and still sell the "greatest common denominator" to demanding audiences (Fourie 2001a: 111).

3.2.3 The intricate relationship between the mass media and consumers

There is an apparent indestructible relationship between communication, culture and ideology, considering the dynamics of how messages are mobilized by the mass media and taken up by the individuals who receive them (Thompson 1995: 7; see also 2.5.7 and 3.2.3). Mass communication brings about a linking process that enables people to feel connected to everyone in their environment. The invention of the Gutenberg press in 1436 with movable type-set letters made mass literacy possible, and constituted the birth of what is viewed today as mass communication. The term "mass" obviously was the key to this innovative plan: culture, history, art, education

and religion could all be made available on paper to as many people as there was a demand that could be satisfied.

Jacques Ellul's total philosophy regarding the attractiveness of technology (as the second great pillar of media determinism) deserves some thought as he spoke about the human being's inability to resist technology (cf. 1964). Ellul's doctrine on propaganda (see also 3.2.5) equates well with many 20th century philosophies and theories that view appeals to the senses, emotions, our irrational unconscious and instincts as superior to our intellect and rationality, implying that man's intellect is too weak to rationally control our inventions. The gratification of emotional and psychological needs and the pleasure-satisfaction inherent in the consumption of the mass media are important aspects to consider in the disciplines of media studies and literacy. People use the media for all kinds of emotional replacements and psychological escapes, according to extensive studies on media and audience reception, uses and gratification, as well as theories in persuasive communication and propaganda.

In this respect the views of Freud on his so-called *pleasure principle* and Lacan's *jouissance* are also of particular importance (Fourie 1997; Fourie 2001b; Macey 2000). These perspectives postulate that there are two certain principles which govern mental or physical activity, and which is directed towards the procurement of pleasure and the avoidance of "unpleasure". "The latter results from increased excitation ... and therefore serves to reduce tension and to return the psyche to a state of equilibrium or constancy" (Macey 2000: 300). Fourie (1997: 135) describes the psychoanalytical theories on the subject/object relationship (where the object in this case is one of the prominent mass mediums to name film), originating "from the French theorist Jacques Lacan's adaptation of Sigmund Freud's theory on the unconscious psychological structures that operate in man. These structures are said to characterize the "acquisition of the self-image and motivate behaviour". Sonderling (in Fourie 2001b: 329) *inter alia* mentions mirror identification, modes of enunciation, desire and pleasure, and regression as further needs and reasons for the attendance to the media on the part of the consumer.

According to the psychoanalytical approach, the viewer's (consumer/receiver) enjoyment is ascribed to the fact that the film as a mass communication medium (cf. 3.5.14) — concentrating on and creating popular culture (see 2.5.7) — is tuned into, succeeds in and reactivates deep and universal structural processes of the human psyche in an enjoyable way (Fourie 1997: 135; Sonderling and Pitout both in Fourie (ed.) 2001b), thus making it pleasurable, and which is pleasurable, man wants to repeat. Another psychologist's concepts are also implicated here, namely the *archetypes* of Jung, about which Marshall McLuhan also has had specific views (see 3.6.2). Esteemed Jungian psycho-analyst Woodman describes this eloquently as she says that people should not only think of culture as being violent and be so scared of it, because the real violence is *within* people. They "muffle it and secretly collude as they watch violent films [and] even the news" (1993:23). Lacan insisted that discord and fracture cannot be cleared away from the psyche, because they *are* the psyche (Ward 1997:134), explaining the growing interest in the media as cultural icons. From this it can be concluded that people use the media for more than mere information, education, facts and surveillance, but that these cultural agents which have been dubbed one of the pillars of society and democracy have numerous emotional and psychological implications, effects and rewards.

Lang (1994: 103) relayed studies in psychology and psychophysiology, which proved that the heart could tell much about the emotional and cognitive activity of a person over time. "Television is a very complex psychological stimulus. Its content [both informational and emotional] and its structural features [camera techniques, light intensity, etc] are constantly changing." She reported that phasic heart rate slow-downs have been shown in response to scene changes, movement, videographics, and commercial onsets. Heart rate accelerations have been shown in response to positive emotion, whereas difficult content on television results in faster heart rates that simple material. Lang continues to say that "[t]hese findings give every indication that heart rate can provide an additional window into the thoughts and feelings of television viewers." This assertion adequately proves how involved receivers of mass media messages can be and are involved in their programmes of choice. Not only do people relate on an emotional and affective level with the media — their physical bodies are also involved in the process of gratification.

The brain, consisting of the left brain hemisphere or "logical", cognitive side of our brains, and the right brain hemisphere which perceives art, music, visuals and holistic viewing of ideas, incidents and issues, learns most effectively when both brain lobes are working interactively. This clarifies why television is so compelling, as it draws on all aspects of communication and media and thus succeeds in stimulating both sides of the brain. We are effectively seduced by images, signals, clothing, music, body language and architecture – a strong appeal used by television to exploit the imagination and senses of the viewer. The viewer then becomes passive as a result of this overwhelming of senses and also gullible, for most possibly he or she has not learnt to analyze critically all the messages coming at her/him. "Our formal education does not train us to be aware of these stimuli; we are usually unaware of any need to asses critically the pictures presented" (Young & Regnart 1992: 24). An awareness of "these stimuli" can be achieved by means of media literacy education, particularly in relation to the popular media content which people consume daily. *Media literacy boils down to nothing other than critical assessing of the media.*

A multitude of audience studies and research has also seen the light in the communication and mass media disciplines. Budd and Ruben (1979: 8) stated the following findings regarding the audience-media interface:

- People watch/listen/read what they most like, and will attend most to the medium that does the best of job of presenting what they most like.
- Television as medium is more likely to appeal to people lacking broader interpersonal skills and links, less education and less option for filling leisure time.
- Important information is diffused more rapidly amongst the population than unimportant information. The more important people view the information being disseminated, the less important the media as initial source becomes and the more important interpersonal channels.
- Flow of content between medium and audience is not simply by means of a direct-line transmission, but is mediated by other parties or received by an individual whose understanding is already colored by a network of group memberships.

- Some of the most important influences of the media are their apparent agenda-setting and gatekeeping functions – deciding what society at large will consider current and important.

The meaning of media messages and programs is not determined passively, but produced actively. Therefore audiences actually do something with what they view and read, and they act while they view (Littlejohn 1999: 336). This statement has direct bearing on the transactional nature of mass communication, but is somewhat disturbing in the sense that it could almost seem as if the audiences/media users ascribe meaning to the media messages they receive in a passive, automatic manner — the typical "couch-potato" allegory.

The content of the mass media has also been ignored by a lot of researchers to ask bigger questions about violence, pornography and culture, which is tantamount to McLuhan's argument that the content of a medium "is like the juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the watchdog of the mind" (McLuhan 1995: 249). Studies have proven this statement correct in stating that we often watch television because of our mood or emotions, and out of habit (Grossberg et al. 1998: 251):

> Media products try both to manipulate our emotions and to use emotions to produce some other effect ... Audiences, in turn, clearly use the media to produce emotional experiences for themselves ... [audiences] do not seem to tire of such emotional uses of media products ... In fact, audiences sometimes seem to use the media to learn about their emotional lives or to produce certain emotional states.

The alternative should be rather to tune in to see something that we have chosen with specific intent and purpose, thus balancing the media diet as urged by advocates of media literacy, and not just mindlessly absorbing the available messages in an indiscriminate way.

The New Mexico Media Literacy Project (2001; see Appendix A) unambiguously declares that "NMMLP accepts the thesis that the mainstream media, led by the major global media corporations, have joined the Dark Side. With their programming and movies, their advertising, their targeting of vulnerable children, their public relations and their lobbying and soft money contributions to politicians, they have become the world's biggest censors, controlling the content of information that reaches the average

person". This accusation directly relates to the function of gatekeeping in the mass media, and also implicates the regulating controls from outside of the mass media.
The problem with effect studies, even in the 3rd millennium where the human being has accomplished breathtaking enterprises such as cloning, is that it is still not possible to prove exactly how extensive the implications, consequences and effect of the mass media, particularly television, are. There is evidence indicating that people can learn about alternative, better lifestyles from television and that this can bring significant ethical changes in their everyday existence. "People from Third World cultures can learn about ways of life in the First World and women can learn about male culture, and this exposure can encourage them to alter their lives" (Carroll in Kieran 1998: 135).

3.2.4 Brief notes on propaganda, socialization and social change

Although the ideology and study of propaganda can fill a singular thesis by itself, it needs to be mentioned in brief, as it relates directly to the aspect of the mass media which daily influence the ways in which we see the world, ourselves and our interactions. Man's continuing search for the meaning of their identities, what they see and hear, say and do, is often aided or hindered by the mass media content, each of which aims to shape, define or interpret for us their understanding of the words, images, sounds, actions and emotions they contain in the forms of messages. "The power, sophistication and apparent authority of these media are often so great that they persuade us to accept their meanings for what we see, read or hear. It could be said that the media try to authorize the meanings of the messages they direct at us" (Young and Regnart 1992: 4). Taylor and Saarinen (1994: 6) confirmed this by saying that "[t]he mediatrix cannot be trusted. It's always fooling around. And yet, that is the milieu that nourishes us." Ratings and figures on the popularity of television shows, films, brand products, certain magazines, and shops and malls testify to this (see consumption figures in 3.6.1).

Media literacy teacher Trampiets (2000a) quotes George Gerbner, communications academic and former dean of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication, who spent much of his professional life researching the impact of television as well, when he said that television is the primary agent for socialization in

the world. It brings countless images and stories into people's homes and classrooms, with great effect, because they appeal to humans' imaginations and emotions and play an important role in shaping our worldview, attitudes, opinions, values and lifestyles. "It's so easy to be captivated by television entertainment, electronic games, surfing the Net and popular music. It's important to live intentionally, to consider the trade-offs involved every time we use media and to spend our valuable time only in worthwhile media activities." This equates with the intentional fallacy in the minds of media producers.

The support of the media use of young people determines a future pattern of media use which can later affect people in ways which may sometimes seem tragic and sometimes cynical, sometimes conventional and sometimes unexpected. The social needs and group pressure-reinforcement of young people make the media even more effective in terms of friends and acquaintances broadly sharing similar interests. Sometimes, such groups are specifically focusing on media use, specializing in enjoying and interpreting this or that type of media content. Movie-going is one of the most popular pastimes of not only young people. The media content consumed and received is often the focus of sometimes lively discussions which help individuals create meaningful pictures, not only of the media content consumed, but also of themselves and of the world surrounding them.

To teach any potential media literacy class — and for that matter any class consisting of any learners who come into any contact with the mass media — a fundamental instruction on the techniques of propaganda in a most basic manner can only be of benefit. Literature consisting of discussions and examples illustrating these techniques are literally abundant. The mere fact that many people do attach a negative connotation to the word *propaganda,* should indeed be a challenge for any teacher, as it is a regularly-applied principle in many encounters of interpersonal and group communication as well.

The techniques, as identified by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis in 1937 (Ross 1994:209; Larson 1995:369), are:

- name-calling,
- bandwagon,
- glittering generality,

- scapegoat,
- testimonial and/or transfer,
- plain folks, and
- card stacking.

When explained simply and properly, learners, particularly on a tertiary institution level, should be able to identify examples from all of these techniques in the media they regularly use and are well acquainted with. This could constitute one of the first and fundamental learning units in any media literacy course and programme, and will be an important step or building block in the model for the teaching of media literacy. There is a wealth of literature available in popular book shops, as well as on the Internet, dealing with the aspects of propaganda, manipulation, persuasion and marketing/advertising, in addition to educational packs containing a video with examples and explanations of propaganda elements and manipulation in the media (e.g. a full curriculum named *"Is seeing believing?"* available from *Newseum* [online], and which already incorporates specific media material with instructions for analysis. It would be preferable, however, that all media consumers become aware of the existence of propaganda techniques, in order to identify these by means of their own insight.)

3.2.5 Applicable mass media theories and models in the media literacy framework

The relevant theories in this context will only be mentioned here in brief and not discussed. Since the first conceptions of the effects of mass communication in terms of the bullet theory, the hypodermic needle theory or the transmission belt theory, via the phases of the limited-effects model of Klapper and the powerful-effects model, to the spiral of silence of Noelle-Neumann, many theorists have contributed to the debates on the content and effects of the mass media. The phases of effects perspectives can roughly be delineated as the innoculation, bullet and hypodermic needle theories; the limited effects theories (Klapper and Hovland); the "dialectic of enlightenment" spearheaded by Marcuse (1964) and 1940s Adorno and Horkheimer of the Frankfurt School, continued by Habermas who viewed the media as "enslavers" rather than "liberators" (Ward 1997:166); the moderate effects of agenda-setting, the spiral of silence (Noelle Neumann) and the knowledge gap; the powerful effects, and lastly the

media hegemony perspective and cultivation theories. Hopefully, media literacy can here be seen as the most recent phase and development of the effects traditions (cf. Baran & Davis 2003)

Another critically important theory of the mass media, devised by Gerbner (1990: 225) during the decades of the seventies and eighties, is the *cultivation theory.* Gerbner struggled for a long time to alter the nature of approaches to mass communication and the media that saw it in different terms than those of propaganda, persuasion and manipulation. The mass media reconstitute those relationships and contexts, the symbolic environment reveals social and institutional dynamics and because it expresses social patterns, it also *cultivates* them. The key to Gerbner's research was to place continuous emphasis on the cultural processes of mass communication which work in an indirect way, telling us what most people think or do something about and have in common (Morgan in Lent [ed.] 1995:105 – 108).

Baran and Davis (2003), Biagi (2003); Fourie (1997; 2001a) and Severin and Tankard (2000), all mention the following theories as pertinent to the study of the mass media effect on individuals and society, and the creation of culture:

- innoculation theory;
- mainstreaming;
- resonance;
- first- and second-order beliefs;
- news refraction hypothesis;
- cultural-institutional model of cultivation theory;
- opinion-leader, two-step flow and third-person effect hypotheses;
- adoption or diffusion of innovations;
- media as change agents and agents of power;
- social learning theory;
- media framing;
- media hegemony;
- modeling theory;
- social expectation theory;
- meaning construction theory;
- stereotyping theory;

- the accumulation theory;
- agenda setting and climate setting, and
- uses and gratifications theory and models.

In the process of developing a model for media literacy education, cognizance of the above theories, which may explain the almost mysterious influence of the media over people, can be of importance. It is, however, not necessary to burden media literacy learners with all the fundamental aspects underlying the above theories, although it will be beneficial for the educator/teacher of media literacy to further comprehend the dynamics between the media, communicators and receivers in the process.

3.2.6 The mass media in the third millennium: typical issues concerning effects

As we progress into the so-called "information age", characterized by McLuhan's Global Village and mass communication messages travelling almost at the speed of light by means of satellite and digital support, the challenges facing the field of mass communication, including media studies, seem to increase daily.

After an initial survey of the relevant literature, an impression of the many issues that researchers and scholars are grappling with, was beginning to take shape. Some of the typical questions, which surfaced repeatedly in the research and literature review in this study, are *inter alia*:

- Can the individual's and society's values be affected by the content of the mass media?
- If yes, which media contents can affect people?
- If people are indeed affected, what are the "symptoms" and manifestations of these effects?
- According to which processes do these effects occur?
- Do people learn from the mass media, and how?
- Can people's basic attitudes toward the world be traced back to the mass media's content?

- Do the media have an ideological leaning and political agenda, which can affect consumers?
- Do the media propagate consumerism and materialism by the advertising component?
- Do people learn specific life-skills from the mass media content they are exposed to?

Even if all these questions have been successfully addressed, a vital last question flows forth. Few adequate solutions to the critical question *whether there are ways to curb or remedy effects of the mass media on individuals and society* have been proposed. Lowery and DeFleur (1995:1) even go further to say that in spite of all the diversity of attention to and time spend on mass communications by so many members of the academy and other groups, a critical question has never been answered fully and with objective evidence: *what do mass communication actually do to us?* It can also be asked, however: why should academics and scholars be the only groups to study and debate the mass media and its contents, which actually are part and parcel of every citizen's daily life?

Although isolated scholars point out that *some* of the following themes can be productively included in a media literacy course, the incorporation of the following learning units on the mass media itself in a fundamental media literacy course are, according to the personal opinion of the researcher, imperative for various reasons:

- It is crucial to briefly examine the origins, components and contexts of mass communication in order to comprehend the fundamental processes at work in the mass media, and thus lay a foundation for media literacy as distinct discipline.
- The content of this chapter is moreover of importance in the sense that most of these aspects can and should be applied in the course of media literacy teaching. The proposed model itself (in Chapter 5) suggests a fundamental knowledge of various issues embodied in this current chapter.

- Lastly, the inclusion of brief references to classical media case studies can most certainly provide points of departure for any educator looking for methods to teach media literacy in class or anywhere else.

A typical list of some of the stereotypical accusations and allegations, as tabled in various sources, against the mass media are mentioned in brief later in this section. The purpose is not to extensively discuss these issues, but rather to achieve three secondary goals, namely:

- to concisely demonstrate what types of issues have been raised in favour of, as well as against the mass media, its message creators/producers and the content, and thus caused the major disputes which were responsible for the launching of the media literacy movement;
- to confirm the need for media literacy based on the ubiquity and extensive content of the mass media; and
- to register specific issues which might be applied in the classrooms in the process of education and teaching towards the outcome of media literacy. This should verify that the practical extensions and applications of media literacy need not be a problem, but rather that the choices and media contents to apply during the teaching of media literacy, are infinite and can be found in virtually all the media.

Social phenomena, such as the mass media, cannot be studied or understood in isolation, and an intertextual and integrated study approach to the mass media and its consumers cannot be avoided (see 4.13). An understanding of the concept of communication in order to understand the need for media literacy is therefore vital. The underlying need for communication scholars, and in fact all media consumers, becomes clearer when the following statement is examined:

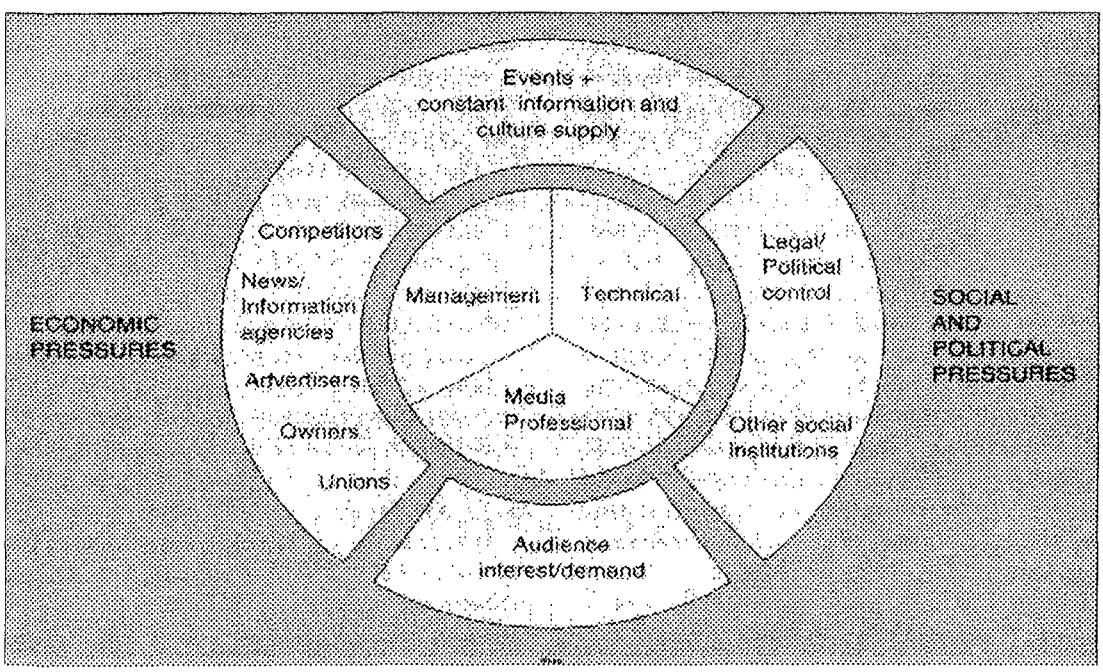
> "Profound and pervasive changes are occurring in the mass media. The concept of "the audience" splinters, media proliferate, formats "blur", technologies advance, globalizations grows as a few conglomerates control more categories of media and far-flung markets, and the basic problem of clutter, of onslaughts of communication, overwhelms us. All this is accompanied by an increase in communication about mass communication. The covers of news magazines increasingly feature not only the stars but also the producers, writers and business people behind the scenes. What also

> increases, amidst the information overload, is the need for clearer understanding of the communication process ... the study of mass communication as "who tells what to whom with what effect" is perhaps the one constant. The who's, whom's, what's and how's change, but the basic interrelatedness of these does not" (Hiebert et al. 1992: 1; Freed 2003).

The need for media literacy even amongst everyday-consumers is pronounced, and comprises a fundamental understanding of the communication phenomenon. The general systems theory which is implicated, also focuses on the transactional nature of communication, going beyond mere "passive" interaction between senders and receivers (Windahl et al. 1998: 85).

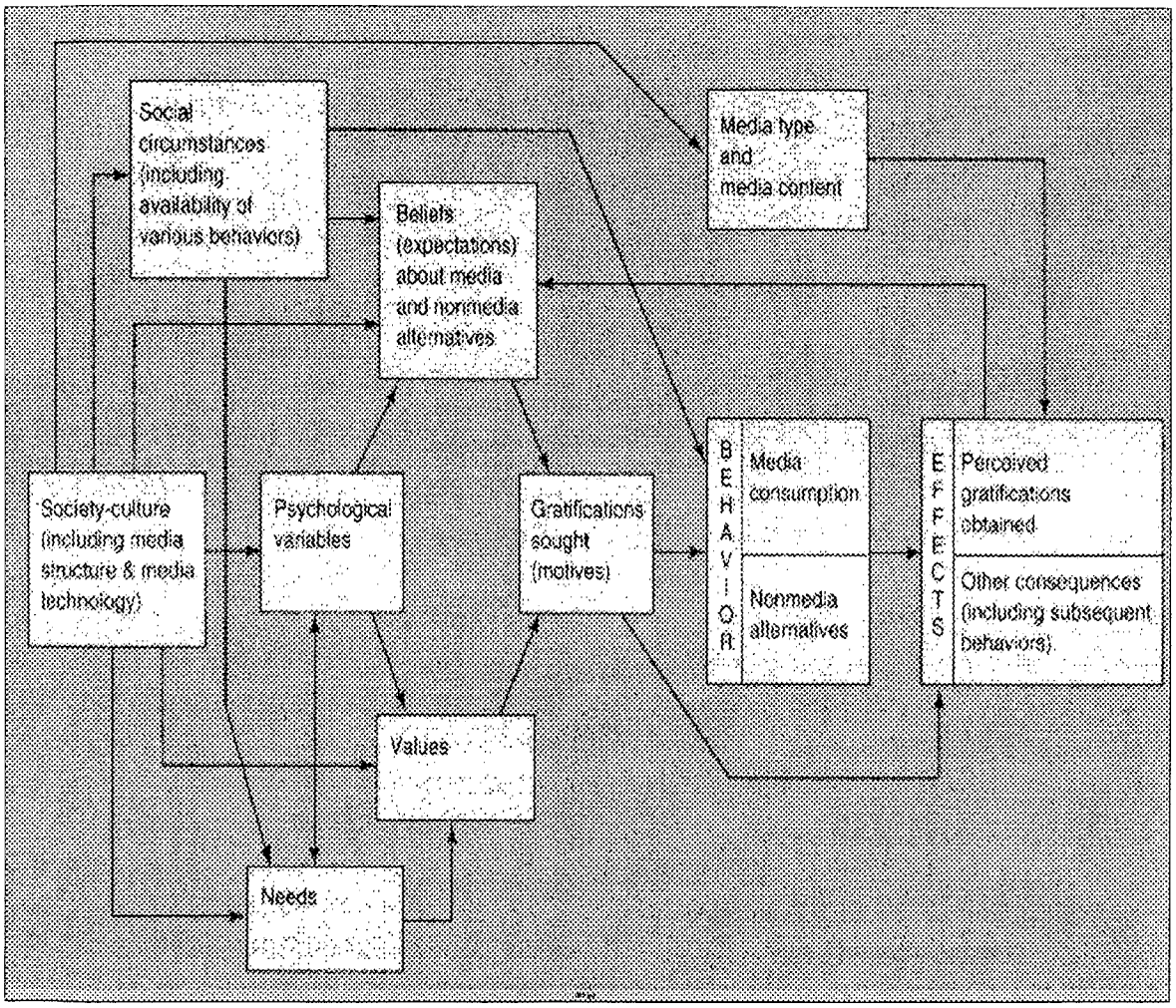
When endeavouring to find specific causes and points of departure in the conceptualization of a model for media literacy, the diversity and complexity of all these related contents are certainly intimidating, which may explicate why the concept and process of media literacy is not a simple matter to embed or even fully accomplish in any society where the mass media are operative. The interests of the different stake-holders in the mass media context against the social and cultural background differ too dramatically to be a simple matter, as the following explanatory figures by Littlejohn (1999:334) on the effect of social forces on the mass media indicate.

Figure 3.4: The media organization in a field of social force (Littlejohn 1999:334).



To complicate matters even further, the consumer (or various audiences) have too many expectations, needs of and motives for using the mass media, which may be of a societal, cultural, religious and psychological nature, for example. The consequent behaviours, effects and implications may therefore also differ greatly. The following illustration or model, also devised by Littlejohn (1999: 352) depicts this problem.

Figure 3.5: The integrative gratifications model of mass media consumption (Littlejohn 1999:334).



3.3 Key debates on mass media content in the media literacy domain

Even if we were somehow able to avoid direct exposure to media messages, we would still be influenced indirectly by the content that have already affected and contaminated our institutions of governments, families, friends, education and religion – society at large. To be free from media effects, a person would need to remove him or herself

completely from society and its main institutions (Potter 2001:9; Grossberg et al. 1998).

In a contemporary and controversial book called *Ill effects: the media/violence debate* (Barker & Petley [eds.]1997:39), all scholars and students in the world of mass communication and media are urged to be much more precise about the kinds of effects people are talking about when campaigning against the media about so-called unfavorable effects and negative implications. "... It is clear that television frequently has very powerful effects – and indeed, those children often choose to watch it precisely in order to experience such effects. Television can provoke many negative responses such as worry, fear and sadness, just as it can generate positive responses and feelings such as amusement, excitement and pleasure and the banishing of loneliness."

Presumably, communicators who design and produce mass messages realize — whether instinctively or as a result of experience and learning — from the beginning that the message will be altered by the medium, although this is very often one of the categorical aims of the communicator: to prepare a certain message along certain guidelines. These may include manipulation, persuasion and propaganda techniques in order to drive home the perceptions and reality of the creator [communicator or source], which is therefore a highly subjective, individual perspective of reality (see 3.2.5). The communicator, after all, has invested large amounts of money, energy and time in the creation and construction of the message, and most certainly wants dividends on these investments.

The arguments and debates about the moral status of the mass media are not new, and some of the issues evolved from very long-standing debates about popular art and the media. As will be seen from some of the warnings about and accusations against the mass media, some of these even go back to 485 BC and have since been with us sporadically and repeatedly in attacks on movies, comics, pulp fiction, pop music, youth culture and fashion (see 3.5). Plato may have foreseen a constellation of mental attitudes and skills with alarm: "... you give your disciples not truth but only the semblance of truth; they will be hearers of many things and will have learned nothing; they will appear omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome

company, having the show of wisdom without the reality" (McLuhan and Zigrone [eds.]1995:61). This quotation could certainly be applied to some of the contents within the context of the mass media.

A demonstration of the long history of qualms about the content of the mass media becomes clear in the following classic accusation: "One powerful agent for depraving the boyish classes of our population in our towns and cities is to be found in the cheap concerts, shows and theatres, which are so specially opened and arranged for the attraction and ensnaring of the young ... When our fear of interfering with personal and public liberty allows these shows and theatres to be training schools of the coarsest and most open vice and filthiness – it is not to be wondered at, that the boy who is led on to haunt them becomes rapidly corrupted and demoralized, and seeks to be the doer of the infamies which have interested as a spectator" (Edinburgh Review 1851:409 in Barker & Petley 1997:69). This statement has direct bearing on the aspect of mass and popular culture: the debate on the effects of the media and culture were already taking a central position in the societal debate during the previous century (cf. 2.5.6).

There has been, currently are, and will always be an increasing public debate about such matters, usually motivated by outrage against some perceived wrong committed by a section of or some of the media. Accusations of bias, press cynicism, media manipulation, condemnations of journalistic intrusions into privacy, worries about the damaging or distorting effect of the television medium and hotly contested pronouncements about the appropriate forms of media regulation or censorship have all hit the headlines with ever greater frequency (Kieran 1998:x). The origins and reasons for these reactions and debates clearly demonstrate the involvement of individual and societal values and principles.

On the other hand, there undoubtedly also exists tremendous support and advocacy for the media's content, and these partisans accentuate the continuity with folk culture, classical literature and drama in popular mass media content (Biagi 2003; Kirkland 1981 in Thomas 1984: 123). These studies have indeed proved positive in nature, confirming Gerbner's suspicion that we make the invisible network of culture visible through various forms of storytelling — which also proves how vital the inclusion is of

low and high culture in media literacy. This is a basic aspect of humanization which tend to make us behave in socially acceptable ways and tells us what those ways are. It now seems that fairy tales, as the remnants of an oral tradition, have been largely replaced in their role as primary instruments for the socialization of the young by television drama as the "mainstream of the symbolic environment cultivating common conceptions of life, society and the world" (Gerbner & Gross 1973 in Thomas 1984: 124). This statement can be directly applied to the popularity of children's programmes, soaps, box-office-hit popular movies, music groups and their productions, magazines such as *Huisgenoot, You, People* and *Drum*, and the tabloid press in countries such as the United Kingdom.

The growing support for the narrative approach and research in many disciplines in the human sciences is evidence of the important role of stories, tales, legends and myths to orientate people in their own lives and problems. Hollis (1995:7) says that "[m]yth [meaning story, word, speech] takes us deep into ourselves and into the psychic reservoir of humanity. Whatever our cultural and religious background or personal psychology, a greater intimacy with myth provides a vital linkage with meaning, the absence which is so often behind the private and collective neuroses of our time ...myth is the search for that which connects us most deeply with our own nature and our place in the cosmos." This statement can account to a certain extent for the popularity of stories told through the mass media, and the growing popularity of the narrative approach in many disciplines and studies (see also McAdams 1993).

The mass media, it is alleged (especially in the USA, the most advanced with reference to the mass media and its implications), have dehumanized life. After a five-year study, the American Psychological Association found that watching television can lead to antisocial behavior, gender stereotyping and bad grades in school (in Pipher 1994: 291). The APA warned that television has become a dominant and disturbing influence on the national psyche, and advised that the Government develop and adopt a national policy to promote quality and diverse programming in order to protect society and individual citizens from its harmful effects.

There are even scholars who argue that the human mind has changed over the past decades mainly as a result of the influence of the mass media. Healy (in Potter

2001:59) maintained that children's minds are being altered by exposure to the visual media, especially computer games. These games actually redraw the brain's neural maps by developing parallel cognitive strategies and not sequentially, which makes tasks like reading and mathematics much more complex. Healy ascribes this to information overload due to the bombardment of media messages which either shut down during school hours or go blank as the teacher "is boring". Many members of older generations are astounded by the level of "street smartness" in children and youngsters everyday, while they are less ready for school every year as a result of declining literacy, concentration and creativity, and are not nearly capable of adult relationships. A superficial evaluation of students at tertiary institutions raises concern about these learners' abilities to think critically and creatively, whilst spelling and grammar capabilities are appalling. It can possibly be ascribed to the preference of the younger generations for the visual communication screens of television, film, cell-phones and computers, where little interpretation is necessary.

Biagi (2003) and Hiebert et al. (1991: 560 – 582) cited the following subjects as the most debated and controversial in the arena of the mass media:

- libel, freedom of the press, free access to information, freedom of speech;
- violence, terror and crime-saturated audiences;
- sex and pornography;
- language, swearing, profanity;
- promiscuity and nudity;
- smoking, alcohol, substance and drug abuse;
- politics and elections being manipulated and conducted by unethical spin-doctors and politicians;
- human rights: issues of race, gender, class and culture conflicts/respect;
- military conflict and terrorism;
- image and grooming with specific reference to body mass and appearance;
- materialism and consumerism (post-materialistic values);
- moral values and ethics i.e. "crime does pay" and "infidelity in marriage is acceptable";
- sexual exploitation and stereotyping of women;
- creation of social identity by brand consumerism;
- homosexuality and sexual orientations; and

- truth, accuracy and fairness.

It is critical to keep the above aspects, as well as the brief discussions about effects and implications in these regards in mind as potential subjects for discussions and production when starting to plan a media literacy program and studies, as these are the aspects about which the youth in particular intensely concentrate on. The route of mass media addiction, after all, is still an easy solution to the problematic discomforts of life. "[People] live as in a trance, mesmerized by the television talk shows, news of the world that comes in byte-sized pieces, films with so much violence and music so ear-splitting that their sensibilities are blunted. They seek pleasure and excitement without asking, Why I am doing this?" (Singer 1994: 220). Once again, Freud and Lacan (Sonderling in Fourie (ed.) 2001b; Ward 2000) are implicated (see also 3.2.3) with their theories about the repetition of pleasurable experiences and the almost addictive cycle springing from those experiences.

Gerbner and colleagues (in Bryant & Zillman 1994: 57) said as a result of research, especially cultivation analysis on aspects of mass media violence: "... it must be recognized that the mass media do more than entertain their audiences or transmit news. They can also influence the thoughts and behaviour of people receiving the media communications ... there are many intervening variables that can moderate the likelihood that the media-activated thoughts will be translated into actual behaviour". This statement relates directly to the techniques and strategies of propaganda (as mentioned in 3.2.5). If an interest is shared by as many consumers as possible, it is most likely to survive in the harsh competition of ideas generated by media producers and communicators. The media may be massive in terms of production, formats and genres, but not in terms of perception where people are free to ascribe their own meanings to messages.

The mass media deliver many values to individuals and societies. "Sports, war stories, police stories and many documentaries reflect violence. The language that we use is filled with words that reflect and sanction violence. In sports, war terms such as *fight, kill, blow them away, destroy their defense, never surrender, fight it out in the trenches* and *victory* are frequently used to describe and depict players' actions and attitudes. Media can also teach other values, for instance the value of gossip ... and how to

perceive the elderly ... and the value of youth" (Samovar & Porter 1991:114,115). Murdock (Ed. 1980:29) added that "[t]he mass media have established a decisive and fundamental leadership in the production and transmission of patriarchal culture in contemporary society. They are more and more responsible for the construction and consumption of social knowledge and represent a key repository of available meaning which people draw on in their continuing attempts to make sense of their situation and finds ways of acting within and against" (1974 in Baehr 1980).

The above exploration only examined implications and effects of the mass media in a larger contextual context. These allegations and observations should be supported by means of references to specific issues and subjects, formats and genres, in the mass media. The following content (3.3.1 to 3.3.15) constitute a synopsis of the most frequent allegations against the media which formed the impetus of the original petitions for media literacy to redress the balance between the communicator and the receiver or consumer. These issues, however, also form the main debates from which media literacy education can be approached. It needs to be emphasized that these matters are also mentioned superficially, since volumes of literature are in existence about the same debates, and since this does not represent the heart of the thesis, media literacy, but rather focuses on the solution to these alleged effects and implications.

3.3.1 Advertising and marketing create consumerism and materialism

Marshall McLuhan is remembered for another of his satirical punch-lines with reference to advertising and marketing as he stated that "[n]ews, by its very definition, is bad; if one hears good news, it must be advertising or PR" (McLuhan 1973a: 5). "It's good for your skin; it makes you feel good all over; it's the good life. Any way you slice it, dice it, chop it, or cut it, most of the thousands of bits of good news we see and hear every day come to us via advertising", says Whetmore (1993: 281). Advertising (derived from the Latin word *advertere* meaning "to turn the mind toward") is not in itself and by itself a mass medium, but cannot be communicated without the help of the mass communication machines and techniques. The purposes and aims of advertising are obviously parallel to that of propaganda and attitude change.

Williamson (in Young & Regnart 1992:172) said that "[a]dvertisements are one of the most important cultural factors moulding and reflecting our life today, and creates structures of meaning. Advertising often suggests that products can buy us the things we cannot easily achieve: love, popularity, sexual attraction, success, admiration and so on. It links possibly unattainable things with those that are attainable ... Thus reassuring us that the former are within reach". In orchestrated efforts and campaigns to try and keep the mass media's advertisements ethic and honest, many organizations, governments and private agencies became involved. It seems as if this sphere of mass communication yields enormous fascination for young people when they have to choose a career. Thousands of students opt to study in market research, media planning and selection, copy-writing, creative production and account management, which is understandable, since advertising must be one of the most lucrative businesses around.

It is clear that the effect of advertisements, based on principles of propaganda and persuasion (see 3.2.5), can have a tremendous effect on media consumers. The growing amount of advertisements in all media formats and the surge in the format of so-called *infotainment* should testify to the need for producers to attain success with audiences. The greater the need for exposure via the media on the side of the producing companies, the more secure the mass media communicators can become when offering their goods to audiences. Advertisements seemingly use higher-order appeals — such as values and needs — to sell products and services, and is an excellent avenue to foster media literacy in all types of learners. It is relatively simple to take any advertisement apart to "read" and interpret the subtext. It has been found that learners at tertiary level obtain enjoyable, albeit primary, media analysis skills when dissecting advertisements in all the media.

The youngest trend of the advertising industry clearly shows the growing tendency of merging media, while it also achieves diversification. Research about so-called "advergaming" (Media-Literacy List-serv 5928; Chmielewski, dated 13 March 2003; also on *Mercury News*) describes that even while no parent would voluntarily subject their children to 15 minutes of non-stop commercial messages for candy and junk food, this is what is happening on the Internet and "manages to fly under the parental radar". When children register on websites targeted at children, they have to complete a

registration form with the permission of the parent. The registering process however requires compulsory downloading of software such as *3D Groove SX.* The latter however, is described as a "technological trojan horse for pushing slick ad messages on children". It seems certain that no child can escape the media-saturated environments filled with marketing and advertising. Educated teachers and parents can teach their children media literacy skills in a media environment, which is mutating daily into ever-more sophisticated ways of reaching children, while they cannot keep children isolated from these media.

3.3.2 Mass media audiences revel in violence and terror

Even while it is difficult to prove direct and absolute links between mass media exposure and consumption on the one hand, and negative and violent behavioural trends on the other, it still seems as if the research evidence trying to blame the mass media is routinely cited. "The remarkable fact is that there is a vast amount of evidence, more than 1 000 studies carried out in the United States and elsewhere, demonstrating a link between screen violence and aggressive behaviour in children ... True, there are problems with this kind of research ... But there are simply too many studies all pointing the same way to be ignored" (Phillips 1994 in Barker & Petley 1997:69).

The mass media have been accused of creating violence and terror by provoking a siege mentality in society (Gerbner in Raboy & Dagenais 1992:94). This allegation might be justified, if one briefly ponders the coverage of 11 September 2001 in New York, and especially the ensuing events pertaining to Antrax-infested postage. Stigmatization and demonization of Islam followers and birth-citizens of Afghanistan isolated targets and set them up to be victimized. The current cultural context discharges a historically unprecedented discharge of media violence into the mainstream of common consciousness, in which social paranoia and political crisis can be fostered. The ultimate victim is an individual's and community's ability to think rationally and creatively about conflict, injustice and tragedy, stereotyping and war, and the web is rife with academic articles on pleas for "peace journalism" rather than conflict and war journalism. It therefore always needs to be mentioned that other factors, such as childhood abuse, alcohol and drug abuse, genetic aspects such

schizophrenia, or PTSD, can possibly have the same effects in individuals with reference to violence and aggression.

Concerns with the presentation of violent material in the media have characterized the history of the major mass media and their development. Over the years, a vast body of published research has accumulated documenting empirical studies of the influence of televised violence. "Repeated viewing of television violence leads to a reduction in emotion responsiveness to violence on the screen and to an increased acceptance of violence in real life ... the argument runs that young viewers become increasingly accustomed to violence in programs if they watch it constantly" (Gunter in Bryant & Zillman 1994: 201).

Sex and violence in popular music, rock videos, films and, most recently, video games and collector cards portraying serial killers are the forbidden fruit for today's curious adolescents. The more adults threaten to censor, ban or restrict the availability of these items, the more alluring their appeal to youth. Steyer, professor of media studies at the University of Stanford, says that the media are the only "taboo-free zone" today (2002). Yet any connection between society's fascination with media products containing sex, violence and sexual assault are often denied at the peril of society.

Although results of certain studies into television violence and the effect thereof on aggression has failed to *fully* prove support for accusations of causal effects between the amount of viewing TV and subsequent aggression and the correlation was very low, it is interesting to note that the personality measure of psychotics was significantly correlated for individuals with their reported amount of TV violence viewing and their enjoyment of television violence (Gunter in Bryant & Zillman 1994: 203). "Humankind may have had more bloodthirsty eras, but none as filled with images of violence as the present. We are awash in a tide of violent representations such as the world has never seen. There is no escape from the massive infusion of colorful mayhem into the homes and cultural life or ever-larger areas of the world" (Gerbner in Raboy & Dagenais 1992:97).

Bombarding viewers (and readers) with violent images of a mean and dangerous world remains, in the last analysis, an instrument of intimidation and terror. This is not an

isolated problem that can be addressed by focusing on media violence alone, such as new waves reacting to media violence and following the 11 September 2001 World Trade Center incident and the recent war in Iraq. It is an integral part of a market-dominated system of global cultural commercialism that permeates the mainstream of the common symbolic environment. Only a new international environmental and cultural movement dedicated to democratic media reform and media literacy education can counter the challenge of violence and terror in various media formats e.g. films, documentaries, music videos, computer and arcade games.

With reference to the world of horror movies, Mark Kermode (in Barker & Petley 1997:57) relates his first experience of a horror movie. "I also sensed from the very beginning that there was something incomprehensibly significant about the actions being played out on-screen, something which spoke to me in a language I didn't quite understand. Like a novice watching opera for the first time and recognizing something in the gestures but never about the language, I felt from the outset that beyond the gothic trappings these movies had something to say to *me* about *my* life. I just didn't have any idea what ...." This statement acutely links the worlds of conscious and unconscious collectivity originating in the world and studies of psychology, particularly with Carl Jung (see 3.2.4), who first introduced these concepts to in an effort to begin to explain human behaviour. Fourie (1997:136; (ed.) 2001b:185-223) advises explanations for the viewer's enjoyment of film, these being that:

- viewers identify with imagined emotions;
- viewers identify with their action of perception;
- a correspondence between people's experience of a film and a dream experience;
- a correspondence exists between the perception of a film and voyeurism; and
- film-viewing exists as a form of fetishism.

A study which is frequently referred to as having demonstrated a causal relationship between media violence and violence in the real world was conducted by McLeod and colleagues (1972). They surveyed 624 thirteen to sixteen year olds and found a correlation between frequency of viewing violent television, aggressive behaviour and aggressive attitudes. Another study, executed by the *UCLA Centre for Communication*

Policy in 1995 concludes that although programming broadcast by the four U.S. television networks has improved in terms of its violent content, there are some types of programming that still raise important concerns: theatrical films shown on television, on-air program promotions, and Saturday morning children's programs containing what the study refers to as "sinister combat violence".

The Ontario Ministry of Education, (who is highly intent on media literacy as school subject) found that it "... is clear that the problems of violence and anti-social behaviors extend beyond the walls of the schools, and, in fact, have reached into schools from the larger society to be manifested in school settings; the impact of violence images in the media cannot be underestimated in the causal matrix...".

In the scientific nature on media violence, the connection of media violence with real-life aggressive behaviour and violence has been substantiated (in Bar-on, Broughton, Buttross, Corrigan, Gedissman, De Rivas, Rich and Shifrin 2001:423). As much as one to 20 % of real-life violence may allegedly be attributable to media violence according to this article. A National Television Violence Study in the USA found the following:

- nearly two thirds of all programming contains violence;
- children's shows contain the most violence;
- portrayals of violence are usually glamorized; and
- perpetrators often go unpunished.

The latest innovation of reality-television, live war, has had one wondering how much adrenaline is necessary to get a daily kick out of television viewing, when journalists were so-called "embedded" in the Iraqi war, and where CNN allegedly had a special war tank built for its reporters in order to get the first footage of this event.

3.3.3 Sex, pornography, promiscuity and nudity become ordinary experiences

In many cultures and societies there are definite conventions about the representation of sexual behaviour, ranging from the extremely prudish and repressive to the most liberal, referring to the representation of all kinds of normal sexual behaviour from

holding hands to full intercourse and to degrees of nakedness displayed (McQuail 1993: 259).

"According to numerous studies of teenage sexuality, American youth increasingly believe that sexual behaviour is merely a matter of personal choice. Rather than looking to adult values and mores, youth look to the media and their peers for appropriate sexual practices. As one sociologist puts it, young people consider it 'their right' to engage in sexual relations. Young believe they are entitled to have sex and popular culture, seems to support their beliefs" (Williams 1989 in Schultze et al. 1991: 57). Current projections and supposedly official figures on the growth of HIV/Aids seem to confirm this notion, which may be in part be propagated by the media, particularly film, television and magazines with no age-barriers and restrictions.

Wallace (1999:163) describes the downward spiral of pornography in the mass media: images and stories depicting aggression toward women and sexual violence became more frequent and widely available during the 1970s, probably in view of the general attitude which was relaxed toward all kinds of pornography. One study found that the number of rape depictions in hard-core paperbacks doubled between 1968 and 1974 (Smith 1976), and another noted a five-fold increase in the number of pictures containing sexual violence in *Playboy* and *Penthouse* between 1973 and 1977 (Malamuth & Spinner 1980: 164). "Psychologically, this aggressive pornography appears to be far less benign that other types, particularly because it may trigger attitudes and aggressive behaviour toward women in real life". On the basis of these statements, one can legitimately ask questions about the prevailing violent and criminal nature of societies everywhere.

3.3.4 Undesirable language, swearing and profanity/religion

In the 1970s a fashion advertiser invented the slogan "[t]hou shalt have no other jeans before me". A German theologian, Sólle, complained that "what is blasphemous is not the use of the first commandment for an advertising slogan, but advertisement as such. Every attempt to direct attention to hair spray, cat food and exotic vacations, she claimed, attacks 'the one in whose image I was created'". Steeped in the charged atmosphere of sales and advertising, popular culture and art induce adolescents into a way of living and life-style, where nothing is sacred, because everything has a price,

including the admonitions of traditional religion (Schultze et al. 1991: 141). "Content offensive to religious believers is often subject to formal and informal control and regarded as culturally unacceptable (....) The objectionable kinds of content are various, ranging from 'taking the name of the Lord in vain' to irreverent or scurrilous portrayals of religious themes and figures" (McQuail 1992:261).

3.3.5 Consumerism, materialism and social identity

Many people achieve status by buying a particular car, house or artefacts. Other people get a sense of power from travelling to so-called ideal destinies [e.g. Switzerland], or from eating in "classy" restaurants. Many people buy items because it is the "in-thing", a fashion trend, such as DVD equipment. People buy to settle a nameless restlessness, maintained Grové (1999: 55). They feel unhappy, frustrated, bored, grudging, lonely and depressed. These feelings drive them from their homes to the shopping malls, which Grové equates with the safety of the mother's womb before birth – both with regard to the pulse and heartbeat as well as the sheltered containment within walls.

3.3.6 Uncivilized and anti-social personal behaviour: reality television and voyeurism

The South African Big Brother series in 2001 heralded the arrival of so-called reality television in its starkest form, when all viewers of M-Net could see the ultimate winner, Ferdinand Rabie, completing his toilet-needs in the garden of the particular house while he was drunk. The viewers could see all the participants taking showers — in the nude — get into bed with one another and see repeated and controversial broadcasts of Janine, primary school teacher and mother of two, performing simulated oral sex on a cucumber. The latest innovation from the reality-TV producers will see a carefully selected group of obese people trying to lose weight with the help of television, a dietician and psychologist. It can only be speculated what the potential effects of such a programme in an already appearance- and weight-obsessed society will be.

In a recent media literacy list-serv message (Antonucci 2002:5611; also on *Mercury News*), media literacy advocates are outraged by the release of a film based on the

television series *Jackass: The Movie,* which has given rise to incidents of youngsters who copy the behaviour in the show/film, such as drenching themselves with water and then have friends setting fire to them, by giving themselves electronic shocks or jumping off trampolines into spinning ceiling fans. (Oprah Winfrey also addressed the rising statistics in injuries resulting from the show/movie in one of her recent programmes on *e-tv* 17 July 2002.) According to these scholars, a large part of the success of the television show. as well as the movie. derives from the very fact that it drives parents, teachers and cultural guardians crazy, says Prof. Thompson (who specialized in the impact of films and movies on popular culture (Media-lit List-serv Antonucci 2002:5611). The core audience is 8-year olds to college age, and therefore the movie is a certain box-office hit. Thompson emphasizes that media influences are the strongest factor in adolescent peer-groups, particularly when teenager who want to distinguish themselves as cool or hip generally feel the need to push behaviour to new extremes.

Fourie (1997:294) states that "television viewing indeed made the pupils more aggressive in various ways. *The biggest effect, although limited,* was found with regard to physical and verbal aggression. It would also appear that the effect of television viewing was a long-term, rather than a short-term process". This could explain the tendency under adolescents to swear excessively and use profanities, especially in the peer-group context, as the author's 13-old daughter regularly complains about.

3.3.7 Sensationalism versus information and news

According to McQuail (1992:233) there have been quite a number of attempts to systematically measure sensationalism by Tannenbaum and Lynch (1960, 1962 and 1968) and Robinson and Levy (1986). It seems as if sensationalism, as such, often comes down to a high degree of personalization, emotionalism and dramatization in content, moving it into the realm of media ethics. It also mostly entails distinctive forms of presentation designed to gain audience attention: the use of large headlines, photographic illustrations and compositions, redundant film material, sound, dramatic music and the use of teasers. There is no need however to search very far and extensively for examples — one only needs to scrutinize the teasers and sub-headings

on most consumer magazines locally. Both women's and men's magazines repeatedly proclaim to let readers in on the "20 best sex positions" of all time.

3.3.8 Stereotyping of women and minority groups discount human rights

Fourie (1997: 142) refers to the theory of feminist criticism which assumes that the electronical media – film, television and nowadays the Internet as well – are products of a sexist society, and:

> that they frequently present biased and stereotyped depictions of women's roles. Because of the prominent place of the mass media in society and the alleged tremendous influence and effects on its audiences, there has been constant concern about the way that the mass media portrays women and minority groups. This led to more women, blacks, disabled and other ethnic groupings fighting harder for access to media structures, arguing that the best place to begin with reform will be inside the mass media (Whetmore 1993: 196).

Macey (2000: 124) says that feminist criticism can take its methodological inspiration from theories as varied as marxism and socialist feminism, structuralism, psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic criticism or deconstruction. According to Littlejohn (1999: 334), this aspect relates to the hegemonic theory of the mass media, defining the domination of a false ideology or way of thinking over true conditions. "Ideology is not caused by the economic system alone but is deeply embedded in all activities of society ... pervasive and unconscious ... perpetuates the interest of certain classes over others, and the media obviously take a major role in this process."

3.3.9 Image, grooming, appearance, body mass and dietary diseases instruct women

The following synopsis on media effects comes from Pipher, a psychologist specializing in teenage-problems relating to the media:

> Designer clothes, leather jackets, name-brand tennis shoes and expensive makeup shut more girls out of the competition [for attention and recognition]. What is culturally accepted as beautiful is achieved only with great artifice – photo croppings, camera angles and composite bodies are necessary to get the

> pictures we now see of beautiful women. Even the stars cannot meet our cultural ideals without great cost. Dolly Parton dieted until she looked ill. Jamie Lee Curtis, who worked months to get in shape for the movie *Perfect*, felt her body was not right for the part. Jane Fonda and Princess Diana both have had eating disorders (Pipher 1994: 56).

Campbell (2001: 9) has done extensive research on the effects of the mass media on young girls' and women's self-image. In most print publications, women are either depicted as sex objects subject to a narrowly defined standard of beauty, or not represented at all. "About-Face, a media literacy organisation cited in the article, estimates that one in eleven advertisements includes a direct message about standards of beauty. Heightening girls' awareness to how women are portrayed in advertising and the media is the key in maintaining their self-esteem as they enter puberty". A current best-seller on this issue (Etcoff 1999: 28, 54, 208) leads one to conclude that the media contribute to growing dissatisfaction of real bodies by assaulting consumers with examples of extreme and perfect body types. People endeavour to control their social environments and relationships by adhering to ideals proclaimed as real in the media. If reality resembled the pseudo-reality created by the media, it can justifiably be asked why so many people are obese and why the slimming industry needs to advertise so incessantly.

Watkinds, Rueda and Rodriguez (1999: 138) emphasize the power of the media as they say that young women — teenage girls specially — are under enormous pressure to fit in with a perpetual beauty competition, judging and criticizing their own bodies from the outside, as men supposedly see them, and to deny how their bodies feel within. "Many women internalize self-hatred as teenagers. Almost every woman feels there's something wrong with some part of her body. Many experience eating disorders. By means of the media, the problem of a deep-down lack of self-esteem is passed on from one unloved, ill-fed mother to her unloved and ill-fed daughters" (Watkinds et al 1992:139).

That the media may teach and model unhealthy sexual behaviour, and normalize and glamorize use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs, seem possible. Heavy viewers and users of media tend to have problems in school and sheer time spent with media limits the valuable time a child spends in active play, creative pursuits, socializing with

family and friends, and reading. Rather than depending on the media industry to self-correct, pediatricians and parents must embrace media education as the best and simplest solution to the public health risks presented by the media. (Rich and Bar-on 2001: 423).

3.3.10 Values and ambitions: the media and soaps tell us how to live

In many cultures and societies there are definite conventions about the representation of sexual behaviour, ranging from the extremely prudish and repressive to the most liberal, referring to the representation of all kinds of normal sexual behaviour from holding hands to full intercourse and to degrees of nakedness displayed (McQuail 1993:259). Steyer (2002) refers to the repeated sexual scenes portrayed in soap operas, particularly by teen-agers and youngsters.

"According to numerous studies of teenage sexuality, American youth increasingly believe that sexual behaviour is merely a matter of personal choice. Rather than looking to adult values and mores, youth look to the media and their peers for appropriate sexual practices. As one sociologist puts it, young people consider it "their right" to engage in sexual relations. Young people believe they are entitled to have sex and popular culture seems to support their beliefs" (Williams 1989 in Schultze et al 1991:57). The increasing statistics of divorces and emotional breakups in relationships however relate a different story entirely.

3.3.11 Smoking and drinking give style and acceptance

"Our society teaches that sex, alcohol and purchasing power lead to the good life. We really do know better. We need to rebuild the media so that its values are not antagonistic to the values we must adopt in order to survive and move into the 21st century" (Pipher 1994: 291 – 292). Bar-on and colleagues (2001: 423) (from the American Academy of Pediatrics) referred to a recent content analysis study on mainstream television programming which contained high numbers of references to cigarettes, alcohol and illicit drugs, whereas one fourth of all MTV (Music Television) videos contain alcohol or tobacco use. Another study found a positive correlation between television and music video viewing and alcohol consumption among teens,

and teenagers and children being bombarded with sexual imagery and *innuendos* in programming and advertising (in Bar-on et al 2001 :423).

3.3.12 The music cult and its teenage-worshippers

A comprehensive analysis is quoted by Bar-on et al. (2001: 423), on research which has found that nearly one fourth of all Music Television Videos [MTV] also portray overt violence and depict weapon-carrying. In another random survey of parents with children in kindergarten through 6th grade, 37% reported that their child had been frightened or upset by a television story in the preceding year.

"Popular music obviously speaks to the high school audience in some very strong and emotional ways" (Whetmore 1993: 420). Popular music holds a central position in contemporary mass media. It is the main content of radio, and music videos that have made it a growing component of television viewing. Music also seems an increasingly important component and aspect in modern feature film productions.

In a study by Larson and Kubey (1983 in Whetmore 1993:422), it was reported that youth and adolescents experienced greater emotional involvement, higher motivation, greater excitement and more openness than for other media. Music is more engaging than television: it speaks to adolescent concerns – "from heterosexual relationships to autonomy and individualization". Specifically rock music may be completely accepted and identified with by teenagers since the very sounds and words mirror the turbulence and intense mood-swings of adolescent experience. "The music reflects the extreme emotional experiences adolescents encounter from moment to moment as part of their daily realities" (Whetmore 1993: 422), again reinforcing the psychological and emotional theories underlining the popularity of the mass media.

3.3.13 Anti-social behaviour

According to McQuail (1992: 261), there is a changing and growing list of undesirable social behaviour which audiences apparently prefer not to see in the media because of the possible reinforcing effect. These would include issues such as cruelty to animals and children, smoking, drinking, drug-taking, harming the environment, spitting, over-eating, bodily functions, and drunkenness. At the time of writing, the second *Big*

Brother-series has started in South Africa, and within the first 24 hours, the interested audiences were astounded to hear ample talk of sex and seeing two of the female house members taking off all their clothes, which could raise speculation that the first series has done away with all taboos and norms, leaving the audience wondering what can still come next after such a violation of personal values.

3.3.14 Films set the trends

The first collection of official social studies supposedly measuring the effects of films on the young, accused the film for inciting everything from sex and violence to larceny and lethargy. The following quotations were all taken from this collection of studies edited by Henry James Forman (in Bianculli 1992:37).

> "Although the motion picture is primarily an agency for amusement, it is no less important as an influence in shaping attitudes and social values. The fact that it is enjoyed as entertainment may even enhance its importance in this respect."
>
> "This type of daydreaming [after watching movies and fantasizing] becomes in reality a sort of drug."
>
> "The motion picture is for the great masses a more significant educational influence than most of the school work done in the country."
>
> "The vast haphazard, promiscuous, so frequently ill-chosen, output of pictures to which we expose our children's minds for influence and imprint ... is extremely likely to create a haphazard, promiscuous and undesirable national consciousness."

These statements summarize the almost magnetic hold that films have for many audiences. What is also astounding, is that the "lower" the intellectual content, the higher the box-office ratings in many cases. At the time of going to print, the follow-up of *the Matrix*, a futuristic film, *the Matrix Reloaded*, was launched in South Africa, to which *5FM*, one of the most popular radio stations among the youth, devoted hours of discussion, spotting of trends, competitions for tickets — in short, a building of a hype surrounding the specific film and changing it almost into a "cult", where even magazines applaud the black leather outfits the actors wear.

3.3.15 Rock stars, celebrities and cults: the modern role models

Sex and violence in popular music, rock videos, films and, most recently, video games and collector cards portraying serial killers are the forbidden fruit for today's curious adolescents. The more adults threaten to censor, ban or restrict the availability of these items — the more alluring their appeal to youth. Yet we deny any connection between our society's fascination with media products containing sex and violence and real sexual assault — at our peril. "I have witnessed a kind of psychic and emotional numbing in the reactions of my students when discussing such programs. Being exposed to countless violent acts, real or manufactured leaves all of us somewhat jaded. What will be the cumulative long-term effects of all this violence on society? Will we be able to react at all to real violent acts, which may occur before our eyes? Or wil we freeze and stare with eyes glazed as though viewing just another reality TV show?" (Redfern undated, retrieved 2002). Also at the time of going to press, one of the most popular women's magazines in South Africa *Femina*, features Madonna, "Mother o Reinvention", on the cover, with a complete article on her marketing abilities and chameleon-like changes over the course of 20 years, claiming that she is the "undisputed Queen of Pop who still rocks the boat, children and all", and causing a "whole new generation of little girls who is about to be touched for the very first time" (*Femina* June 2003: 42).

3.3.16 A summarized perspective of the mass media effects on individuals and society

It is clear that literature is abounding with studies about the effects of the media and consequences of exposure to the contents thereof. The models featured in this section above made it clear that there are many factors and variables interacting in the dynamic field of media-and-consumer, of which few can be controlled, as they are situated in the psychological and affective realms of the consumer and the eventual viewpoints and purposes of the communicating agents within the mass media.

While the above alleged accusations and debates seem, in a sense, too vast and too many in number to manage. It certainly seems as if attempted control and censorship have gone out of control, while isolated people and organizations must feel as if they plead in vain to bring home the implications of the media content mentioned above, which represent merely a number of concerns, and not even all aspects. It is once

again realized that the existing measures to "manage" the media are not sufficient, and something more is needed in the education of media consumers.

In the following section, the current *status quo* of media literacy in international and South African contexts will be examined.

3.4 The current international state of media literacy as field of study

Downs (Media Education Center 2000) is of the opinion that the United States remains the only major industrialized nation to disregard the educational mandates of comprehensive media education, although the educational community of the USA hopes that the pilot site of the *National Media Literacy Project: Pilot State New Mexico* will give impetus to the provision of a cost-effective and practical model of school reform, and will assist in leading the nation in the implementation of comprehensive media education and media literacy. It however seems as if the government of the USA is quite involved in the quest for media literacy and media education, specifically in view of the national televised one-hour special on media literacy compiled by the National Education Association which was broadcasted on 24 May 2001 (Electronic Journal CX2001141N5774). Taylor (2002) is of the opinion that, although the United States lags far behind Canada, there are certain organizations in the USA that think media literacy should be included in the school curriculum right through, and that what is currently being done, is not enough. Heins and Cho (2002) argue that media literacy in the USA is a patchwork quilt of nonprofit advocacy groups, for-profit providers of educational material, and assorted state and local initiatives of which only a handful receive federal funding. There is however a high level of enthusiasm for this vital part of education of the youth.

On the other hand, it seems as if there is general consensus among stake-holders and educators that Canada and the United Kingdom is far ahead in the study discipline of media education and media literacy, where it has been taught in schools since the 1980s. However, an article (2001) by Hart from the UK again raised the question of what exactly teachers of English mean when they say that they are doing media education in secondary schools, where it is compulsory. Hart complains about neglected learning areas of media institutions and production, weak teaching methods

and absent media technology training. Heins and Cho (2002) are however unanimous that England should be seen in many ways as the birthplace of media literacy education, and which they claim, was started by Buckingham.

Canada's success and progress with media literacy and media education is ascribed to the fact that Canadian education is more centralized. The Canadian media literacy environment seems extremely orchestrated and formalized, being a compulsory curriculum in all grades and levels and schools, and with multitude of so-called citizen bureaus for media literacy.

The 29th General Conference of Unesco, supervened their international documents of the *Grünwald Declaration on Media Education* (Unesco 1982) and *New Directions in Media Education* (Unesco 1990). Following these documents, the Austrian National Commission for Unesco and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs in co-operation with the international body of Unesco, organized an international conference titled "Education for the Media and the Digital Age" on 18 – 20 April 1999 in Vienna. (This conference, according to literature on the Internet, was facilitated by Kathleen Tyner, and also attended by South African Jeanne Prinsloo, cf. 3.6.1. and 3.6.5, together with various and many other media literacy scholars from over the world.) The participants of this conference recommended that Unesco, as a result, should:

- facilitate media education research, specifically aimed at exploring projects in countries or locations that wish to introduce of develop media education programmes;
- stimulate media literacy and media education research;
- evaluate proven evidence and successes of existing approaches and practices;
- develop appropriate guidelines, based on ethical principles, to address corporate sponsorship of media education initiatives and programmes to ensure that the educational integrity of curricula, pedagogies and resources are not compromised;
- facilitate cross-cultural evaluation of initial and in-service teacher training methods and programmes and ensure the sharing of experiences in their utilization;

- facilitate partnerships and financing to fulfil the recommendations of the Vienna Conference and design an action plan;
- propagate the existing copyright conventions and encourage the development of national and regional copyright instruments which take full account of the needs of media education (e.g. copyright for educational purposes); and
- set up an international clearing house for media education, which should collaborate with functioning national and international networks and organizations dealing with education, formally or informally; disseminate media education material and strategies, and promote and stress awareness of media education while endeavouring to orchestrate an international representation and development.

In addition to Prof. Suzuki Midori's (see 3.7.11) orchestrated efforts to entrench media literacy in Japan, there are elsewhere in Asia similar movements, e.g. in Taipei in Taiwan. In Japan, there is a period for integrated study in the Japanese high school curriculum in 2002, to stimulate experiential training. Apparently, there is also a large body of Japanese research exploring media theories, the history the Japanese media, the economic and structural links between different media, and globalization of the media. This includes a growing number of publications, often by former media practitioners, which provide evidence of the complex interrelationships between the media, politics, industry and society (Jennison 2002).

A newspaper article (Veera 2001) published in Malaysia, reported that there are six new programs in media studies and communication — which are "closely inter-related and dependent" — established at the *Institute of Integrative Media* in order to be able to compete in the current era of modernization and globalization of the media. There is ample evidence of structured and formal media education in all of the following countries: Canada, France, Israel, Wales, Australia (since the 1970s) and New Zealand.

There are many and various types of so-called clearing-houses for media literacy, where any person looking for quality information and literature on media literacy can be directed to multitudes of web-sites, media scholars and organizations. In addition, there are at least five influential Listservs (e.g. Frank Baker; Jim Ficklin; Northwest Media Literacy Center), being computer networks and supplying continuing conversation among professional teachers and leaders in the media literacy field. This researcher can testify of the multitude of interesting research and "scanning" which are brought to the attention of listed subscribers every day. *Children-Media-UK* is a typical space where academics, regulators and media practitioners can engage in critical debates about the media and children, while *Commercial Alert* is a moderated e-mail list to help families, parents, children and communities defend themselves "against harmful, immoral, intrusive advertising and marketing, and the excesses of commercialism".

The Internet abounds with websites of international so-called activist organizations, such as *Action Coalition for Media Education* (New Mexico) who also organized a so-called *Media Democracy Day* on 18 November 2002 in order to "push and promote a mass media system that informs and empowers all members of society"; *Adbusters Media Foundation* (Canada); *Media Channel*; *People for Better TV* (formed only in 1999); *TV Turn-Off Network*; *Media Watch, National Telemedia Council, National Association for Family and Community Education, Mediascope*, *Children Now*; *American Academy of Pediatrics* who annually runs a national public education campaign called Media Matters, and the *Media Education Foundation.*

Individual activists such as Drs. Paul and Elder, Dr. Peter DeBenedittis, Jean Kilbourne, Robert McChesney and Sut Jhally also prosper on the Net. A wealth of books on the commercial and popular content of the media, and accessible to the lay-person in terms of parents, church and youth leaders, teachers lobbyists, media advocates, politicians and students are available from bookstores. Notably, South Africa with its relatively media-rich environment, particularly in the African context, has not yet focused on issues such as these, which could possibly be ascribed to the struggle for press freedom in the latter decades, the attention given to developmental

and societal issues at the insistence of the government, and the establishment of the black press and black media empowerment.

3.5 Prominent international media literacy pioneers and organizations

A perusal of the most current and important role-players and organizations in the media literacy world provides additional insight into the motives for the discipline's development, as well as the main rationales in the developmental process of media literacy, particularly as independent curriculum in schools and tertiary education contexts. Obviously, there are many other strong and equally capable leaders, academics and scholars making headway in media literacy, such as Cary Bazalgette, Robyn Quinn, Barrie McMahon. Robert Kubey, Frank Baker and Tamar Liebes, to name but a few, but only the most prominent figures in terms of scientific literature — who repeatedly cropped up in literature, and who were referred to often by other scholars and organizations — were included in the discussion (which can be read in Appendix B).

3.6 Media literacy teaching in South Africa

It has been briefly mentioned in the introduction (see 1.1) that there was an apparent and hesitant venture to kick-start media literacy in South Africa during a national conference held in Durban during September 1990. It seems as if this attempt to launch this critical learning-area came at the wrong time, barely just before South Africa entered a turbulent decade of heavy political, economical and transformational changes. South Africa was struggling with other issues that other countries have dealt with decades earlier, such as getting racism removed from society's law-books. In the meantime, the international movement moved to prominence in other countries and states. (This does not imply that the establishment of media literacy as acknowledged subject and process had it easy in other countries, as Pungente (1996) relates how the first wave of media literacy, which was known as "screen education" in 1960 "died out" as a result of budget cuts and general "back to basics philosophy". Following this, there has been a new and revitalized growth of secondary school media literacy

studies in the 1980 and 1990s, "during which Ontario became the leader in media literacy".)

3.6.1 Media consumption in South Africa

It is clear that media literacy and media education are advanced concepts and study fields in developed countries. It can be misleading to ascribe this international status, and South Africa's relatively low profile in terms of these subjects, to the media environment and media consumption of countries, such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom. It is therefore vital to briefly look at available figures of media consumption in South Africa, if media literacy needs to be justified as an independent field of study on many levels, but specifically in tertiary education contexts. (The associated following statistics in Appendix C have been released by the *South African Advertising Research Foundation's* (SAARF) AMPS, RAMS, TAMS, SA Media Groups Measure (MGM), Branded Data Survey and SU-LSM) surveys of the second half of 2002 [online].)

South Africa, according to research executed by Teer-Tomaselli (1997), has a predominant youthful population, where just over nine million persons are between the ages of 10 and 20, which is why the Government has established a Youth Commission with the Office of the Deputy President, and which office identified the youth and media, specifically television, as an area of concern internationally. Teer-Tomaselli emphasizes the fact that there is very little existing research about the youth category of 15 – 20 years' consumption of the media and their cultural meanings ascribed as a result of television. While the media are charged with information, education and entertainment, it seems as if the youth focus strongly on six primary genres: dramas (sitcoms and series), soaps, music and magazines, life-skills education and news. The controversial *lovelife* campaign, supported by the U.S. *Kaiser Family Foundation* and led by Dr Sinclair from the USA (Nolan 2002), is a typical example of advertising and marketing focusing on improving general health care.

From these statistics (in Appendix C), it is abundantly clear that the typical South African citizen is just as "media-driven" as for example American counterparts, with the

exception of the Internet. Media literacy is therefore as crucial to this growing democracy as in all other developed countries. It is also noteworthy that the most popular programmes on television are either Western-based or sport or soaps, which can be described as "shallow" media content in order to satisfy the needs of the multitude of users. While South African media consumers are equally exposed to mostly Western content in terms of the television and Internet media, the country has a strong and advanced newspaper, magazine and radio infrastructure. In these media, the content may have a different emphasis than the excessive consumer- and profit-driven nature of Western content, in the sense that being a developing country in transformation, the Government insists that media industrialists and practitioners often put a more developmental and socially-responsible angle on media messages and products.

Applicable examples in this regard are *Isidingo, Back Street, 7de Laan and Egoli* – all South African soaps which are excellently rated internationally, but include more societal issues such as HIV/Aids, poverty, unemployment, drugs, cultural and ethnic differences, and violence and crime. While the South African advertising industry is seen as very sophisticated and advanced, some advertisements may rather prefer a slant of typical South African values and issues, such as the education of children. In this regard one can think about the *Telkom* advertisements which illustrate rural areas without any phones, which will probably seem incredible to typical First World residents. (These aspects only have implications in terms of the *what* or the *content* of a media literacy teaching model (see Chapter 5.4), and not in terms of the *process* of education. The primary difference in terms of a South African model being compared to existing international approaches or techniques for media literacy education, is with reference to the preferable indigenous use of South African media products.)

3.6.2 South African literature on media education and media literacy (books)

In South Africa, only two books dealing explicitly with media literacy and media studies could be found on this subject: *Media matters in South Africa* (edited by Jeanne Prinsloo & Costas Criticos 1991) and *Media and Meaning* (Young & Regnart 1992).

The publication dates of these two books incidentally are close to the one conference held in South Africa to date.

Lusted (1991: 1) states that "the recent increase of interest and activity in teaching about media is at least surprising if not extraordinary. As little as five years ago, the range of activity was no more than could be comfortably referenced in the memory and a single bibliography. Today, it is hard to keep track of each new book and classroom resource as it emerges ... All this suggest that teaching the media is now a growth industry". Unfortunately, this is not yet the case in South Africa where media literacy teaching is not merely seen as a tool of teaching other subjects, but is rather taught for the inherent value in itself. Media literacy is definitely not only teaching with the aid of certain media such as film or video, but rather teaching about the mass media's nature, functions, political and economic ideologies. Although some perceptions exist that media literacy is a general knowledge of the *content* of the mass media, this is only one facet of the subject, albeit important.

3.6.3 Media literacy school curricula in South African education

Various efforts to verify the existence of media literacy in South Africa were launched. The Free State Provincial Government's Department of Education was for the first time contacted in April 2002, and then again in January 2003 to ascertain that the media literacy subject has not surfaced yet in the envisioned educational plans. After working through a labyrinth of various officials, the Departmental Heads of various subjects were located. These officials indicated that they had no defined knowledge of media, literacy as a subject or curriculum, and expected it to deal with acquainting learners with the media centre in schools. This equates with the notion of information literacy to a certain extent as mentioned in the previous chapter under point 2. (Personal interviews with Mr D' Olivera, curriculum head of Free State Education).

Various headmasters and deputy-headmasters of prominent schools in the Free State (Bloemfontein) were then contacted to enquire about their knowledge or awareness about the media literacy subject (personal interviews with Mr Cassar, headmaster Eunice Secondary School, Dr Payne, deputy-headmaster of Eunice, Mr Coomans, headmaster of Universitas Primary School, and Dr de Villiers, language educator

involved with various schools). All of them indicated that they have never come across the term, and neither are they aware of the formal inclusion of content on the nature or process of the mass media as such. Teachers/assessors are however encouraged by both the headmasters and the prescribed curricula to make use of the media in order to enrich various subjects such as languages, life orientation and arts (Mr D' Olivera, 3 March 2002). One of these headmasters also attested that there is a renewed effort by the Provincial Education Departments to encourage the use of *media centres,* meaning the school libraries and computer laboratories.

3.6.4 Academic searches for South African literature on media literacy and media teaching/education

The library of the University of the Free State launched two exhaustive searches during 2001 and 2002 for any media literacy literature in a South African context under the following key or index words/phrases: *media studies tertiary education* and *media/cultural studies; cultural studies; media literacy; media education; media teaching; media analysis* and *popular culture.* These searches yielded limited results (31 articles in total for the period 1991 to 2002), of which the following are relevant and worth mentioning:

- *Anthropology, racism and the media*, which argues for the inclusion of one more required course in the media studies major at universities, specifically an "Introduction to Social Anthropology" (Baker 2000:250).
- *Nouns for the adjective: new directions in English studies* (Green 2000:55 – 64). This articles focuses on the three streams of language, literature and media studies currently taught at the University of Natal.
- *Rebranding English till it hurts* (Chapman 2000:44 – 54). Chapman describes how aspects of English are currently taught at the University of Natal with the assistance of media content, and explores the relationships between literary studies and cultural studies.
- *Communicative competence expanded: a multiliteracies approach to English Additional Language teaching.* In this article, the author (Archer 2000: 83 – 96) argues in favour of the use of a medium, video, in the English Additional classroom. It maintains that media education theories can complement language learning, although there are not expansive explanations of these theories of media education.

- *The Australian journalism vs cultural studies debate: implications for South African media studies.* Keyan Tomaselli and Shepperson (2000:60 – 72) respond to one Windschuttle's attack on media studies, as he identified it in Australia with consideration of the South African location and the canonical responses to media theory by some journalism educators in the country. The same two scholars also protested earlier against Windschuttle's misconceptions about the cultural studies approach and the misreading of its foundations, in particular structuralism and ideology (*Cultural studies and theoretical impoverishment;* Tomaselli & Shepperson 1998: 89 – 99.)
- In 1998 (138 – 162), Watling, in *Critical autonomy in practical media work,* explored some of the background to critical autonomy, which has become one of the prime orthodoxies of media education and the frequent debates about it. It describes three levels of critical studies, which can be identified during the analysis of practical work.
- An article (Grazioli 1997) in a medical education journal, which closely relates to the definition of media literacy as stated in 2.2, reviews some of the relevant and reliable American literature regarding a sexuality education programmes (see 4.8.3 for values education), which can modify adolescent sexual behaviour and increase adolescents' understanding of their own moral values.
- *In and out of language teaching: media education in South Africa* (Prinsloo 1995: 251) offers a critical overview of South African media education practices during the eighties. It is however clear that it mainly forms part of the language discipline, where learning is facilitated with the aid of some of the media, and not about the mass media in itself.

It is noteworthy that the first of these articles appeared in 1995, four years after the launch of only two books on media messages and meaning/media literacy in South Africa, and that research in this regard is again relatively absent since 2000. It shows nonetheless that the concept and phenomenon of media literacy is not completely unexplored in South Africa, but that there were definite attempts to isolate and define the subject within the larger educational systems of the country. As is the case with various overseas developed countries, a specific growth phase or "spurt" is visible, but where other developed countries recommenced with the advocacy and research on the subject, South Africa possibly had too many other crises and issues to deal with in the following years of the decade of the 1990s.

3.6.5 Internet articles on media literacy in South Africa

On the Internet, *only two web-sites/articles* referring to media literacy in South Africa could be found during various extensive searches on the acknowledged search engines.

- *Virtual School* (a European venture) placed an article titled *Civic Memory* on the Web. This article deals with an advertisement in the South African media during October 1999. Charlize Theron was used as profiled celebrity on the aspect of appalling rape statistics in SA, in which she came to the conclusion that "real men don't rape". This ad campaign raised "a storm of protest" and controversy from various people and groups. The advertisement and consequent reaction was applied as case study to define and illustrate civic memory and civil responsibility and courage, being an direct consequence of media literate citizens (The Virtual School 2002). This article claims that the educational system has undergone transformational changes which now also accommodates media education, while South Africa strives to move out of the "shadow of the dominant trends of International Media Education". This perspective is yet another viewpoint of media literacy: offering school and adult learners an opportunity to become citizens who are actively involved in society, and in which media education offers to animate social action or "critical literacy", also labeled **civic courage, civic outrage** and **critical citizenship**. The anonymous author categorizes these terms as follows:

- **Critical citizenship** implies an intellectual or analytical component to **citizenship, also procuring courage;**
- **Civic courage**, which is the equivalent of "professional and intellectual maturity and understanding of issues";
- **Civic memory**, meaning "social analysis and contextualization of media events, while
- **Civic outrage**, meaning a moral analysis which examines the media in terms of content pertaining to justice and human rights, and "information and analytical competence.
- **Media education**, explained in the context of this article as "an inclusion of civic memory and civic outrage into our media education programs";

- The definition of media education reads as "an empowerment of learners, essential to sustaining an active democracy and of a public which is not easily manipulated on media issues because it is critically informed and capable of making judgments".
- A brief list of the benefits of media education is included: students become critical media "readers" in order to discern falsification and bias; an understanding of media production; a safe environment in which moral and social questions on the media can be explored from other perspectives; and the opportunity for citizens to voice their views through various media forums.

• Another article — the only one — relating to media literacy in a South African context, was found on the *California Newsreel*, with the article title *Prime Time South Africa* (undated). The content discusses how the transformation of South African television "from a mainstay of apartheid to a tool for building a multi-racial democracy is one of today's most under-reported media stories." The article analyses how SA television, specifically the SABC as dominant, publicly owned broadcaster, tackled the daunting task of generating a new sense of national identify and community. However, it was found that this essentially "modernist" project is guilty of two general mistakes, namely the seemingly irresistible penetration of national markets by powerful global broadcast entities and the simultaneous "post-modernist" trend towards particularist, ethnical lifestyle programming. The researcher applauds four specific South African programmes/genres: *Soul City, Local Voter, Rhythm and Rights* and various commercials. The key question in this article focuses on the participation of the public in the programming schedule which is seemingly unsatisfying in terms of the developmental requirements that the Government, and specifically the State President, Mr Mbeki, favours and indeed demands. The ultimate question asked, is whether the public's interest in the media can be equated in South Africa with whatever media interests the public. While this is a worthy exercise in media literacy, it is however only using the South African content for Californian citizens.

It is therefore clear that there earlier existed specific concerns about the effects of the media and the possible consequences it holds for society-at-large. Certain

researchers clearly thought about these concerns in a South African context in the beginning of the 1990s, and even held a conference to address these matters. As will be mentioned in Chapters 5 and 6, media literacy is a process which will most probably grow slowly in the beginning, while it needs people to disseminate the concept through targeted communities and societies. If the phenomenon can be revived in this country, as in other developed countries that also complained about the initial hesitating development of media literacy, many individuals and society can benefit from it on micro- and macro-levels.

3.6.6 Educators in South Africa involved with media literacy

Extensive Internet-searches with the assistance of various search engines showed up only *four* addresses on thousands of websites and lengthy lists for virtually hundreds of people and organizations involved with media literacy internationally. These addresses were used to contact the people by means of e-mail (**Addendum F**).

- Sue Court
  Department of Education
  University of Natal
  Court@mtb.und.ac.za

To date, no reaction followed the various e-mails sent to Ms Court.

- Costas Criticos
  Department of Education
  University of Natal
  criticos@iafrica.com

Mr Criticos promptly replied to the request for information regarding his involvement with media literacy education. Criticos is currently the principal consultant of *LearnSpaces,* which undertakes professional and research assignments in Educational Development and the Design of Learning Spaces. While initially being a physics lecturer and then in education, he started publishing in the field of media education. His main focus has been educational media and educational environments, and in 1985 he established the Media Resource Centre, and has served on the World Council for Media Education since 1995. Mr Criticos was the organizer of the national conference on media studies in Durban, and co-authored the earlier-mentioned reader on media education in South Africa (1991). Mr Criticos stresses the utility of media education in the advancement of democracy and critical citizenship, which crystallized

in the notion of a "media citizen". As a result of his media production teaching, new media producers became mindful of the civic dimension of their craft. Since 1998, Criticos moved his focus to the disciplines of outcomes-based and experiential learning in formal and non-formal education, and visual sociology. He says, however, that he is still marginally involved with media education, the media being a tool for outcome-based and experiential learning and teaching.

- Tracey Naughton
  Director NYAKA
  tracey@sn.apc.org

In this case, no reaction was received either from Ms Naughton.

- Denise Newfield
  English Department
  University of Witwatersrand
  dnewfield@literature.wits.ac.za

Ms Newfield was on a study sabbatical, and this researcher is still awaiting an answer since January 2003. (Her departmental head however, informed that she is actually a lecturer in English language, but sometimes uses popular media content and messages in her teaching.)

The evidence of these persons' addresses on the web indicates definite, but once again isolated attempts to integrate South Africa in the international quest for media literacy, specifically on the Internet and WorldWideWeb.

3.6.7 Beneficiaries of media literacy in the South African media landscape

There are various media groups in the media landscape in South Africa, who can either hamper the development thereof, or contribute to the potential progress of the subject. If a more media literate workers core and profession can be cultivated, society in itself will also gradually become more media literacy as a result of quality programming and reporting. The following groups and organizations have much at stake in a society that is media literate, since they will be the direct beneficiaries of media literate practitioners.

While the search for media literacy may be a modern concept and term, the concerns driving the process are not so new. Habermas, the Frankfurt School and Mattelart, amongst others, propagated the change of content of the mass media to eliminate consumerism decades ago, amongst others. Enzensberger (1974) and Williams (1977), also had views of transforming media manipulation from a minority to a majority phenomenon, because media audiences are active creative beings who need the media for cultural expression. Lanigan and Strobl (1981 in Louw 1989) devised points of departure to conceptualize a South African media and communication strategy, which included the activation of the:

> political masses for communicative emancipation and developing communicative competence ...toward reaching "understanding" in the spontaneous creation of media programmes ... by the public in the articulation of their perceived societal needs and interests" as well as the "encouragement of society-wide democratic practices and the media's role in these.

Tomaselli and Louw (1991) at the time, emphasized the development of "critical and aware media producers and users", if South Africa hopes to develop an information economy in which all citizens are empowered — and in which the participation of education policy formulators would be of critical importance with reference to aspects such as media ownership, news selection, television programming and manipulation. "Present and future media producers would benefit from media-instruction to make rational use of media ... to help human beings regain control of the media and the social communication process and overcome the 'culture industry'".

This requires media education or training for both producers and receivers, and Tomaselli and Louw (1991), emphasize the importance of understanding media theories; their social context; the meshing of media institutions into power relationships in society; being able to 'read' the media messages and configurations of media technology in order to produce critical, thinking media people. The media audiences or consumers must recognize the importance of their participation as citizens in the service of democracy and feel empowered that their participation will make a difference.

The authors sceptically point out that the South African masses could not see through the previous government's abuse of the media because of a lack of media education and "media literacy". While it will take a long time and considerable resources, "a start has to be made somewhere". It is notable that this revolutionary article in media literacy terms was written and published at the same time as the earlier-mentioned media education conference in Durban and the two other books worth mentioning on these subjects (see 3.8.2). There was thus a definite ripple in South Africa in the media literacy realm, which sadly seems to be overwhelmed by all the ensuing political changes in the decade of the 90s. This article of Tomaselli and Louw (1991), however, emphasizes the importance and potential value of media literacy for all stakeholders and role-players in the media environment. The following organizations can play a critical role in both the dissemination of the media literacy concept and may eventually benefit in terms of well-educated media workers.

3.6.7.1 Sanef (South African National Editors Forum)

Sanef was established in 1997, resulting from a "merger" between the Black Editors Forum and the mostly white Conference of Editors. The organisation, however, battled to get from the ground, because of mutual mistrust and paralyzing attempts to "hijack" the group for singe-issue agendas (Du Plessis in *Rapport* 2001:18). When the Human Rights Commission launched their hearings into racism into the media, the then Sanef-members realized that press freedom could be under a serious attack, creating an overnight-division of the reporting worlds in two main camps: the press freedom fundamentalists and the supporters of alleged racism in the media.

This served as a wake-up call for Sanef, and in June 2001, at a conference in Kirstenbosch, the committee and members focused the organization to stand united, particularly against issues on press freedom and media independence. During 2002, Sanef launched an extensive and deserving audit into journalism standards in South Africa, with specific reference to the training provided by journalism institutions, and the current skills of reporters operative in South Africa (De Beer & Steyn 2002: 11 – 86).

Liaison between the current Sanef members, other media stakeholders and Government is optimistically evident. At a meeting between various role-players, such as State President Mbeki and his ministers, Sanef, the African Union, Nepad, Democracy and Institute for Dialogue, issues such as the role of the media in democracy, the role and status of independent media in Africa, and our envisioned African Media Charter and the role of media practitioners in the developing South African came under attention (Jeffreys *International Journalists Network* 2002).

The results and conclusive report following the audit were somewhat disturbing, emphasizing various problem areas. Salient issues which emerged from the audit are the following (De Beer & Steyn 2002:11 – 87).

- Perceived mistrust between Government and the media. While Government experiences media reporting on its policies and activities as unfair and unbalanced, and some irritation about the skills of journalists to report accurately on individuals' names, titles and positions. It is however the deeper-rooted issues in the changing South Africa — media policies, ownership, management, ethics, and technological and human resources work environments — which are problematic. Media literacy education can certainly address these aspects.
- Transformation in the media industry in terms of matters, such as globalization, the convergence of different media and changing roles of media workers require, according to the audit and report, a serious need for improved journalism education and training. News criteria for example, can only occur when a person is media literate, while the changing nature of audiences, who become more specialized daily, also exact new demands on reporters. This challenge must also consider the financial viability of the news media, which is to be balanced against the needs of the audiences, ethical aspects and advertising revenue.
- The transformation and growing diversity media in the media seemingly produce a new culture of media workers and audiences who do not belong to racial or ethnic/cultural groupings, but are rather mainly interested in news. Any South African citizen should understand something about these aspects and effects of transformation and diversity. Many educated people

are furthermore not clear about the fact that all media are essentially businesses who are profit- and consumer-driven.

- Apparent lack of training of media workers showed up as one of the critical findings in the report. It is clear that the (news) media in general lack the necessary training policies, time, staff capacity and financial resources to address these matters of training. The fact that this problem is marked as critical, must lead one to assume that an inadequate understanding of the media institutions, its nature, characteristics, functions and audiences, gives rise to various other crises in the media industry.
- The most critical areas in the performance and reporting of media workers are:
    - conceptual, critical and analytical skills, creativity, enquiry skills, general knowledge and knowledge of media systems;
    - Language skills, both general and mother-tongue;
    - Life skills in terms of communication skills, correct and positive attitude in writing and reporting, professionalism, sensitivity to race and work ethics, and media law;
    - Practical and writing skills in terms of production such as interviewing, multi-skilling, accuracy, spelling, writing in an audience-directed manner;
    - News awareness, insight and general knowledge have been identified as critical problems, which relates to one of the more isolated definitions of media literacy, being a knowledge and awareness of media *content;*
    - While editors indicated that they prefer reporters with formal journalism education, exceptions were found in all regions;
    - Knowledge and experience of relevant issues which need to be taken into account when producing news stories, include the impact of deadline pressures, insufficient background for the receiver to gain insight, and insight into the story's context and relevance combined with insensitivity towards the incidents and people involved in stories.

One of the primary recommendations in the report following the audit, is that communication between training institutions and the industry should be prioritized. It

was suggested that Sanef links with other agencies such as MDDA, Mapp Seta and Sacomm to focus the training and development of media workers. In all the above cases, media literacy education can address the problems to a certain extent. Once a person understands more of the discipline of communication, mass communication and the media, better products will become possible. Altschull (in Claassen 2002: 97) emphasizes the fact that "no job or work demands a larger amount of cultural literacy than journalists, which indicates the urgency of re-training of reporters and media workers to improve media literacy and writing skills.

3.6.7.2 National Department of Education

A well-updated website on the Internet contains the information regarding the new curricula and subjects for Grade 10 to 12, on which the public was invited to comment until 31 January 2003. Various attempts were thus launched to contact the national Ministry of Education with the South African Government with questions on the existence/inclusion of media literacy into any of the current or envisioned subjects for schools on all levels. E-mail correspondence were sent to the following departmental/qualification heads on national level on two occasions: 6 December 2002 and again on 18 February 2003. Electronic mail-messages (**Addendum F**) were sent to Departmental Heads for the following subjects/curricula (as these addresses appear on the national website of the Department of Education): Arts, Languages, Human Sciences and Life Orientation/Skills. To date, not one of these letters enquiring about the *status quo* of media literacy of media studies were acknowledged or answered, in spite of various requests to the website's webmaster as well.

Teachers, as well as parents of learners (in the Free State, Western Province, Gauteng, Pretoria and the Western Cape), known to the researcher were consulted, and various of these people indicated that there are occasional assignments focusing on the content of the media, as well as writing assignments for some of these media. (The majority of these assignments occur in the languages subjects, where learners have to do oral presentations on newsworthy content from the media itself. The content of the media is also applied for the purposes of comprehension tests. Some interviewees also stated that the weather charts, as featured in the newspaper, are used for Sciences subjects.) However, no traces of media literacy education in the

sense of information pertaining to the mass media itself, its nature, characteristics, roles, and ideological and economical status or institutions could be found.

3.6.7.3 The South African Government: media transformation and diversity

In a report in *Rapport* (Cornelissen 2002:10) it was bluntly stated that the biggest concern regarding the proposed laws advancing media diversity and development, will be Government interference from the Office of the State President in the person of Dr. Essop Pahad. The report claims that the ANC has ignored most of the comment and criticism, while experts and groups are convinced that the Agency for Media Diversity and Development can only survive, if it will function completely separate from Government. Media groups have at least won the argument about contributions to this body, and may give it voluntarily and not by mandate. It seems as if the National Association of Broadcasters feels strongly that this committee's functions dealing with media diversity and development may overlap with that of ICASA, as the latter supposedly should advance diversity and control over historically-disadvantaged media and media groups. It was stated explicitly that a representative from Government will form an integral part of the committee, which will decide which media groups receive money and who not, which is tantamount to a censored press (2002:10). It is, however, vital that such a representative has to be media literate in order to understand the intricate functioning of the mass media. (The support of the SACP in this matter may seem somewhat disturbing.)

3.6.7.4 Misa (Media Institute of Southern Africa)

Another young organization, the Media Institute of Southern Africa, relentlessly acts on behalf of journalists and newspapers both in Southern and South Africa. The current chairman, confirms that "... Misa strives for the freedom of speech and the protection of journalists on a wide front", but rather communicates primarily with members of the media, and not so much with the general public. Their efforts to protect society against various effects of the media are noteworthy, but may amount to an unorchestrated endeavor for media literacy on a micro-scale. They do receive some media recognition in specifically newspapers, and occasionally launch well-worded attacks on the media. An example in this case is the letter forwarded from Misa to the Namibian

media on the issue of racism in the film industry (**Addendum F**). The terms *media literacy* and *media literacy education* were however not familiar to the managing committee. If all of these advocates can be optimally media literate, the visualized education and training can occur more scientifically and focused.

3.6.7.5 ICASA (Independent Broadcasting Association of South Africa)

An official request by means of e-mail was directed to ICASA during October 2003 to enquire about their opinion on the issue of media literacy. Their spokesperson sent the researcher a lengthy speech delivered by Mr Mandla Langa, Chairperson of ICASA on 1 October 2002 at the 33rd Annual Conference of the International Institute of Communications, and indicated that this represents ICASA's views and opinion on media literacy. The document relays that ICASA "hopes to develop policies and regulations that will ensure that our communications industries continue to grow, whilst meeting important cultural and economic objects [which] ... is no easy task in a heavily contested environment and we will continue to refine and improve our approach to regulation".

This sentence in itself suggests a comprehension of the importance of culture and finances for the media, while the reference to regulation again speaks of little media literacy. What is important in this document however, is that there is a focus on the promotion and protection of indigenous cultural industries through airtime quotas, independent television production and indigenous music while "we are still a net importer of music and films". ICASA claims to address these national cultural issues in the age of globalisation, which is increasingly becoming prominent in media content. It is thus to be hoped that ICASA will support a media literacy education initiative. They see it as one of their important functions to protect consumers from unfair business practices, poor quality services and harmful or inferior products (www.icasa.org.za 2002). This can be accomplished by providing media literacy education on a broad basis in order for the consumers to protect themselves.

It is abundantly clear that there are many and various role-players in terms of powerful organizations and persons in the media landscape, who can either support or hinder the development of media literacy education. In the event of a national initiative for

media literacy education, the advocacy of these stake-holders — who can incidentally benefit from a more professional media sector — will be crucial.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, it was endeavoured to address the meta-analytical question of the study, and to explore the state of affairs regarding media literacy as a teaching phenomenon on an international and national scale, and so supply an answer to the meta-analytical question.

Since the study discipline of media literacy springs from the bigger study contexts of communication and mass communication, it will imply that these contexts will also supply many of the reasons for the calling of media literacy. Through the past fifty years' development in the mass media, many questions have been asked about the relationships between the mass media, its products and content — and even the communicators and producers of these messages — on the one hand, and the audiences and receivers within the realm of society and culture on the other hand. Questions, such as whether the people learn from the media, and the effect of the media on people and society's values, are found repeatedly in literature. The fact remains, however, that modern people live in a mass-saturated society which cannot and should not be censored or banned.

A fundamental understanding of the phenomenon of communication is necessary in order to comprehend the concept of mass-mediated communication. If the classical definition of the "sharing of meaning" is applied as an ideal for the communication, it at least presupposes that both partakers — being the communicator and the receiver of the mass communicator and mass audiences — should have the same basic knowledge and skills, in order to encode and decode messages in an equal sense. The ideological and economical nature of the mass media, being mainly profit- and consumer-driven, necessitated specific strategies to honour the demands on them to survive, of which sensation became an important product and method of survival.

This may have led many receivers of mass messages — the audiences — to become conditioned to lower-content texts and products, particularly in the realm of advertising, film, drama and soaps where many subtextual messages form the bulk of the content.

Accusations of the manipulative and propagandistic content of mass media messages have become a part of the mass media research traditions and content, and many studies focusing on these type of contents can be found in literature. In addition, the receiver of mass media messages have an undeniable affective and psychological attachment to the media, which view was supported by the user and gratifications perspective of the mass media.

If the audience can become equally involved in the decoding, accessing and analysis of media messages, the input and participation of the receiver, according to the transactional perspective of communication [developed by Gerbner], can be heightened with the effect of improved sharing of meaning. When scholars debate these points, examples of mass media with references to the inclusion of violence, sex, swearing, promiscuity, false values, stereotyping and sexism, amongst others, are usually included. Therefore these media texts and genres can become springboards for the teaching of media literacy, which aims to equip audiences with skills to access and decode media messages.

All of Gerbner's ensuing research up till 1991 had led him to eventually say that people must be freed from the existing media structures, which are beyond the reach of democratic policy making by "mobilizing Americans to act as citizens, as effectively as commercials mobilize us to act as consumers". The cultural process of storytelling, the most distinctly humanizing phenomenon, is being increasingly taken over by global commercial interests who have something to sell. Other scholars often express concern about the fact that education is being taken from the parents and schools to the mass media and popular culture, as primary instructors about life. What cannot be denied however, is the fact that popular culture is the choice of the masses, and that this choice of mass communication will never be affected if the audience are not equally empowered in relationship to the mass communicators and producers. Popular culture becomes mass culture, because so many people prefer conformity and peer group acceptance to the exertion acquired by critical thinking and individualism.

A more radical inflection of citizenship and civic responsibility would see both critical analysis of media and public participation in production and decision-making as constitutive elements of a democratic empowerment that should be open to all. It has been argued that democracy in mass communication implies a right to transmit

Chapter 4

Exploring the most plausible methods for media literacy teaching

In this chapter, attention will be focused on the following categories of media literacy teaching:

- Points of departure for media literacy teaching
- Constituting a matrix of various approaches and techniques for media literacy education
- Key principles and core building-blocks in media literacy teaching
- Orientational frameworks for media literacy education
- The seven great debates in the media literacy world (Hobbs)
- Analysis of specific media content and messages
- Specific issue- or message-driven analysis of media messages
- Production of media messages and content
- Education focusing on cultural studies and popular culture content
- Comprehensive and advanced academic approaches to media literacy education
- General guidelines and hints for non-educators to foster media literacy on grass roots level
- Comprehensive academic and advanced approaches to media literacy
- Multi-disciplinary subject incorporation

"For all it can do for education, media literacy won't cure cancer, and it's not brain surgery. It won't take a miracle for teachers, using a variety of methods and approaches, to help students extend their analysis, evaluation and communication skills using video production, audio-tape, still photography, on-line services and more. While media literacy holds out the promise of helping reshape teaching methods and practices to become more inquiry-based and student-centred, it may too easily be turned, by the new technologists and publishing industries, into just another "product" to be delivered by book, videotape or satellite dish into young minds. For an institution which has historically clung to the concept of literacy as the central organizing force of education, we must respect the time it will take to promote the type of sustained and meaningful change that is needed ..."(Hobbs 1996).

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 has addressed the meta-analytical research question of the study by focusing on the state of affairs regarding media literacy as a teaching phenomenon, as well as related frameworks and paradigms in which media literacy is embedded and derives from. This also implied an exploration of the fundamental issues and debates driving the media literacy movement. The current status quo of media literacy on international as well as South African levels were consequently explored, with an index of the most prominent media literacy leaders in other countries. Attention was also devoted to organizations which might benefit from media literacy education in South Africa, and who can play a role in the dissemination of the subject.

In this fourth chapter, the *theoretical research question* will be put under the searchlight in terms of an inquiry into the most plausible theories on the teaching of media literacy, for which the methodology of conceptual analysis will be applied. Although relevant literature abounds with definitions of and pleas for media literacy and the advantages of the process itself, less emphasis is put on the methods of academic teaching contents. The perception in this case once again presents a field consisting of fragmented suggestions and many so-called "educational packs" and programmes — which may prove the fact that teachers often are at a loss when they should start with media literacy education. The fact that the mass media pervade most people's lives in the third millennium does not imply that teachers, or any other media consumers for that matter, know and understand the intricate nature, roles and workings of the mass media.

It needs to be emphasized that an enormous diversity in terms of teaching approaches and media literacy was found in the literature review. A multitude of specific

"categories" or "levels" of media literacy education were encountered. The more prominent organizations as well as financially orientated groups provide isolated lesson plans for pre-primary levels through to secondary curricula on K-12 (our local matric or Grade 12) level. The abundance of suggestions and hints are indeed confusing and distressing. These necessitated an intensive search and consequently an extensive effort to structure and categorize the existing material in terms of similarities, differences and even targeted role-players and stakeholders in the process. It should be mentioned that there are endless web-pages of information for *school teaching* of media literacy, while very little is suggested for *tertiary training*. This obviously results from the fact that media literacy is an independent and integrated subject in the earlier-mentioned developed countries, and that media studies as self-sufficient subject in South Africa is mainly encountered at universities, often in the guises of communication, mass communication and journalism.

As mentioned in Chapter 1 (see 1.6.2 and 1.7.1), the literature review consisted of academic and popular books, academic journals, social artifacts such as magazines, newspaper, films and television, and the Internet. The academic books and formal theoretical media literacy focusing on education form the lesser part of the body of knowledge on media literacy, while a mass of quasi-intellectual material exist on the Internet. While several of the best-known media literacy advocates possess Ph.D.'s, it superficially seems as if these scholars separate their intellectual products and research from the dominating organizations with which they are often involved in the media literacy study field.

Quite often, these academics serve together on the boards of prominent organizations (such as the Media Awareness Network; The Center for Media Literacy; Media Literacy: Webster University; Media Literacy Online-Project: University of Oregon; Association for Media Literacy (AMLA); Rocky Mountain Media Literacy Project; PLAY; Vidkids; NAME/NAMAC; The National Media Literacy Project; Citizens for Media Literacy; Center for Media Education; Action Coalition for Media Education; Alliance for a Media Literate America; Just Think Foundation), but rather share their knowledge more in terms of popular teaching techniques and approaches. (Even academics such as Prof. Reneé Hobbs, Dr John Pungente and Prof. Art Silverblatt emphasize the ideal popular and secular media focus of media literacy teaching as they urge teachers to be

"hip" and "cool". An article titled "Yo, are you hip enough to teach media studies?" by Hobbs emphasizes the importance of teachers being involved with popular culture 2000, cf. 2.5.7). The same fragmented diversity, which was encountered with reference to existing definitions and descriptions of media literacy, was thus also found with regard to teaching approaches and techniques.

It is noteworthy that strong academic and theoretical literature, as opposed to the profusion of non-academic, non-theoretical and rather popularly focused material, is rather sparse. Recent books on media literacy in a strict academic and theoretical sense can be numbered, while the web-sites and reading matter aimed at the general population and specific target groups such as Christians, parents, youth groups, teachers, lobbyists, politicians and youth leaders are boundless.

Even though media literacy is positioned as an independent and separate curriculum in Many of the previously mentioned First World countries, educators who have studied the media and are thus furnished with vital knowledge and skills pertaining to the mass media, are limited. From literature, it can be concluded that it is often the language and social sciences teachers who are thrown in at the deep end to teach media literacy (see 4.13). Educators highlight conceptual problems as they state:

> It's a new subject and it needs to have its own terms to define it as a new subject" ... "I need to have specialist terms to make me feel that I can grasp a certain subject" ... "Our course was a disaster from the start." "We were inadequately prepared ... and had no philosophical background from which to start. It is actually very hard to know what to focus upon and exactly what structure to build your course around (Hart 1997:17).

It is clear that the *need* for media literacy education is apparently understood or even sensed, but *how* to teach the implicated knowledge contents and skills is another matter completely, specifically for the educators involved who seldom have the communications and media background and are required to teach media literacy from the context of other subjects i.e. languages, social studies and life skills.

There is a great diversity of mass media and even more formats and genres in these

various media, offering their informational, educational, entertaining and pleasurable products to the mass audiences. It is possibly this very abundance of texts and messages, which can leave educators at a loss of where exactly to commence with media literacy teaching. As is often the case in the current entrepreneurial time-frame, there are many individuals and organizations who offer to come to the rescue by means of educational media literacy packs and plans, naturally at a price, and mostly on the Internet (e.g. *Kidsnet; Media Literacy Online Project; PLAY [Project literacy among youth]; In The Mix; PBS Media Literacy Quiz; PBS Dissect an Ad; PBS TeacherSource Media Literacy; Teen Health and the Media Website; Caught in the Web: Online Advertising Targets Kids;* and *How to become a TV critic.* A small percentage of these materials are actually available for free.)

These educational packs and/or plans, however, rarely include an entire media literacy course with vital and fundamental foundations dealing with the nature and role of communication and the mass media. Specific genres or media content are suggested in these "packs" (i.e. advertisements, documentaries, soaps, drama, films or children's programmes, with detailed instructions how to analyze that isolated content and message/s, and in many cases a very specific advertisement or programme is indicated, which is available on video with the education or teaching lessons or "pack" (*The Ad Campaign; Telling it like it is?; Mom, where do TV's come from?; Risky Business; Making Magic; The Reel World; Consider the Source; Suffering Stereotypes; Speak Out!; Facing Reality* on website called *Daily Lesson Plans for Media Studies.* It should be emphasized that many of these educational packs seldom include fundamental communication or media knowledge and theoretical grounding.

What is certain, is that there are many and various perspectives and angles, from which media literacy can be taught. While one group would focus specifically on knowledge contents about the mass media, another teacher may make ample use of mass media equipment (such as a VCR or magazines or television advertisements) in class, thus familiarizing learners by means of experiential (hands-on) learning, and thirdly another educational approach could focus on production of media content. As previously mentioned, the wealth of definitions of media literacy is fractional and emphasizes different aspects and angles of the process of media literacy. Lastly it is

vague as where exactly to commence with the process of media literacy education: in the media itself, with the assistance of government and implicated departments, with media producers and practitioners, in kindergarten or in primary school, with the parents, with the educators on all levels of learning, or even with stakeholders such as churches and libraries.

One example of a state initiative originated with the National Education Association of the United States. They obviously believe media literacy to be so important that they disseminated a national newswire during the month of May 2001, announcing an interstate television broadcast titled "*Mind over media: helping kids get the message*". This program content consisted of media literacy initiatives, which were formulated specifically to help children and teenagers distinguish between the positive and negative images that they see in all forms of media, to understand the real-world consequences of actions that may seem inconsequential on screen and to recognize different forms of manipulation (National Education Association 2001: 100814). The motive behind this initiative, according to NEA president Bob Chase, is that "young people absorb thousands of negative media messages about violence, sex, race, gender, ethnicity and other critical social issues every single day. The NEA may not be able to change the media, but we can teach our children how to view the media critically. Teens must learn to make sense of the messages being promoted – sometimes even directly to them – via television, movies, Internet sites, video games, music lyrics, magazines, advertising and all other forms of media" (National Education Association 2001: 100814). (It is ironical that this campaign is run in a country, which is widely accused in literature that they are lagging behind in the quest for media literacy.)

As the need for media literacy education has been established in preceding chapters, the thesis is transported to a more complex stage in which specific questions should be addressed, if the goal of the thesis is to develop a model for tertiary media literacy teaching. It appears as if answers to these questions must be explored:

- How to do media literacy education? What approaches and methods are available for the teaching of media literacy? Whether the person who ventures into the teaching of media literacy is a formal educator or complete

novice, is immaterial, since one of the visions of media literacy is to involve the society at large, particularly from grass-roots level upwards including all levels of individuals and communities, whether these people are literate or illiterate in the traditional meaning of the word.

- Who should become involved with the dissemination of the concept and the training/education of media literacy? The process cannot be left to one specific person or group of stakeholders, as this embodies the essence of a fully-inclusive and democratic process in the sense that the dissemination of the concept should be communicated in all directions and spheres.
- Where does one start with the initiation process, especially if there is not a fundamental awareness about the media literacy process, or even the aspects of the mass media, which calls for the embedding of media literacy in the South African society?
- What are the vital knowledge contents and skills to focus on in the process of education?

4.2 Points of departure for media literacy education

As with most other concrete matters in life, specifically in the realm of the social and human sciences, theorizing is far less complicated than doing. After the conceptualization of any constructive process, the question always arises: how to start with the education of media literacy in the interest of a whole nation of younger people, who should learn how to navigate the media environment?

The learning process of media literacy, as with many other subjects of learning, are never completed fully (cf. Potter 2001; Hobbs 2000 for emphasis of lifelong-learning) and should rather be viewed as an ongoing and continuous process on a continuum of learning which can always be advanced and accelerated (cf. Table 2.1 of Potter in 2.6.6). It is therefore crucially important to carefully determine the mental capacity of the learners in the selection of a possible approach and learning contents, whether cognitive, affective or psycho-motor behaviour in nature. The educator has to establish what the learners know about the process of communication, the mass media, its functions, nature and structure as well as aims, in order to know where to start with the

education. Do the learners actually have any deliberate exposure to mass media content, even though many of these messages are unavoidable? What are their favourite programs and exposure levels? It must be kept in mind that some South African previously-disadvantaged learners still do not always have access to television or the Internet (see Chapter 3.8.1 for statistics), and that a film-going culture was never nurtured in many of these cases. The cultural diversity of media content in South Africa can also cause minor obstacles, since the majority of the learners must at least be aware of the program/content in order for it to be discussed, and people mostly expose themselves to that media contents which correspond with their own cultures.

In the early beginnings of the media literacy movement, the most crucial and critical question that haunted media education teachers and educators was: Is it actually possible to teach "the media" itself as well as about the media in a coherent and disciplined way? Morgan (in Pungente 1994) recommends a starting point which always proved effective when uncertain of media education: "We should begin with students and teachers' media interests and pleasures ... Teachers should explore the dynamics of media practices they are implicated in and which are central to their communities ... Examine the spirals of pleasure and power: the modes of pleasure, the modes of persuasion, the types of consent operative within a given cultural form ... This posit multiple points of resistance and negotiation rather than the victimology we now have".

This issue is being raised repeatedly in relevant literature: the fact that dealing with contemporary, current or popular and "hip" stuff will be the best and largest average denominator (see 2.5.7). This method is possibly the best starting point in the tertiary teaching of media literacy. The educator will do well to start with the available and prevalent television programmes which enjoy high ratings and mass popularity under young learners, as well as favourite magazines/newspapers on the shelves. (This is quite easy to establish during a class discussion about media preferences.) Students are requested to bring their radios to class. Magazines and newspapers can be handed out. Learners can be instructed to write cultural literacy and news (general knowledge) tests. Current popular advertisements and talk-show programmes can be viewed and analyzed in order to start a discussion by means of class participation, for

which they can receive marks. The class as a group can go to a movie to discuss it afterwards in class — and the lecturer can require that the stub of the ticket should be attached to the assignment. Students and their educator can go to a shopping mall to observe the barrage of messages inviting and inciting consumers to buy, or can go to the cinema as a group in order to observe the experience of film and theatre.

This researcher can testify to both the acceptance of and interest in this type of approach after teaching media literacy for two consecutive years to a group (sixty students on both occasions) of second-year media studies students at the Free State University. The suspicion, that learners lose interest as soon as they are being told about the discussion of a new academic or *theoretical* approach, technique, perspective or framework of media analysis, has been confirmed. Their interest should be piqued in direct dealings with the popular media with which they regularly "interact" and which "forms" their reality. The historically-deprived student in the South African classes — in particular at the University of the Free State — in any event relates far better to the approach where they work backwards from practical skills to theoretical knowledge contents rather than any other method. This is also being called the inductive method of learning, which marshalls **critical thinking**: the heart and main pedagogy of media literacy teaching.

David Buckingham and colleagues (in Pungente 1994; Buckingham 1994b) emphasized the need, as one of the first and fundamental steps on the way to media literacy, to establish what students already know about the mass media and how they currently make sense of it. Eventually it has to be concluded that the only guideline to consider is that researchers and advocates of media literacy are agreed that there are various ways in which to do media literacy education/training. Silverblatt, Ferry and Finan (1999: xi) remind pointedly that *there is no one single truth to media content, but that the key is to be able to select critical approaches that provide fresh insight into media content.* These authors discuss five potential but advanced approaches that can be applied when a certain audience is already relatively media literate. (These approaches are concisely described in 5.3.11 to 5.3.17 to demonstrate the advanced level of critical thinking that media literacy can ensue after initiation into the more fundamental issues.)

Two very basic and fundamental questions which are invariably raised by students in discussions with regard to media literacy, according to Silverblatt (1995: ix), read as follows:

- Are all of the complex layers of meaning contained in media production indeed added purposefully (as scholars such as Enzensberger (1974) and Gourley (1999) maintain); or
- Are these interpretations simply imposed upon the content by overzealous critics and hysterics — the so-called media literacy revolutionaries?

Silverblatt (1995: 2) says that his own definition of media literacy — "the ability of a citizen to access, analyze and produce information for specific outcomes" — builds to a large extent on the following critical elements and summarizes many of the goals of this process succinctly:

- an awareness of the impact of the mass media on the individual and society.
- an understanding of the process of mass communication.
- the development of strategies with which to analyze and discuss media messages.
- an awareness of media content as a "text" that provides insight into our contemporary culture and ourselves.
- the cultivation of an enhanced enjoyment, understanding and appreciation of media content.

This implicates that the above five ideas or elements can be approached in a multitude of ways to eventually arrive at the same ideal: a measure of media literacy. Every time the process is repeated, the receivers/learners may develop and advance incrementally, and how one ultimately arrives at the imbedding of media literacy, may be quite an academic matter. (Media literacy education, from personal experience in the case of this researcher, has proven therefore to require a substantive degree of energy and concentration, to which one should add *creativity, originality, presence of mind, and resourcefulness*, particularly in the absence of an appreciable infrastructure in terms of media equipment and finances to purchase these with; see also 5.9 for a discussion on the ideal media literacy educator or facilitator.)

Because of the fragmentation, differing and overlapping definitions and available literature on media literacy education, the following academic inquiry in fact suggests that various perspectives generously "borrow" and exchange smaller detail from one another in spite of these approaches being classified as definite and unique approaches to media literacy. The approaches and techniques in this chapter have been selected from the massive volume of suggestions and "education packs", because these were the most often encountered perspectives and practical teaching methods which became prominent in the literature review and subsequent analysis which contained academically-acknowledged pedagogical principles (1995: 88,89).

The researcher endeavoured to apply elements of all the ensuing methods in this chapter during classes with second-year media studies students at the University of the Free State, although more basic aspects were applied in discussions about some of these approaches at another learning institution, where media studies is offered only as part of diploma courses in public relations, tourism, graphic design and human resources management. It needs to be mentioned that there is a vast number of small and basic "educational packages" for media literacy teaching available on the Internet — naturally at a price, while it does not take an advanced (see 4.12.4 for an example) mind to think of methods to discuss and analyze popular culture media examples. It does, however, demonstrate that many teachers responsible for the implementation of media literacy education find it difficult to determine a starting point, particularly with reference to the contemporary contents of the media.

While Tolson (1996: xv) is of the opinion that the "greatest problem for media studies, as regards the analysis of media texts, has to do with the approach that is often taken ... [which] approach claims to be critical, but from a media studies perspective it is not usually critical enough", Hobbs (2001) sees this as beneficial. She emphasizes the potential of various approaches, which can be applied, all with equal success:

> As the media literacy movement gains momentum in the United States, our increasingly diverse community of educators, community organizers and activists, scholars, social service and media professionals have a lot of issues to debate, because media literacy can take many different forms. Moreover, the techniques of media analysis can be relevant to almost every major policy issue — both domestic and international — and media production makes it possible for people to contribute their voices to the complex, deep and important issues which face us as we enter the 21st century.

The various prominent approaches and techniques of media literacy education as encountered in literature will be consequently discussed, categorized according to the principles of conceptual analysis, and briefly evaluated (in italic text following the approach or technique).

4.3 Constituting a matrix for various approaches and techniques of media literacy education

One method to address the practical problem of the teaching of media literacy, would be to concentrate on those available literature contents that the majority of media literacy advocates at least have consensus about as potential methods of teaching media literacy. However, the wealth of various teaching approaches found, representative of both traditional academic literature as well as the Internet, reveals a lack of systematization. Instead of merely listing these approaches, the researcher therefore decided to apply the scientific process of conceptual analysis in order to develop categories into which the wide spectrum of teaching approaching can be categorized.

For purposes of synopsis, a matrix or table was constructed after intense deliberation to indicate the categories ascribed to current teaching approaches and techniques. It needs to be emphasized that no such index, directory or matrix on proven methods, by which media literacy can be taught, could be found in literature.

It also needs mentioning that these "methods" of media literacy teaching are recorded under various headings in the literature, for which no scientific explanation could be found. The researcher or scholar is to a large extent consigned to impressions when studying the various labels or "headings" allotted to the specific pedagogies. The descriptions of "framework" (apparently implying a teaching context or teaching setting); "teaching technique" (referring to a method or specific steps in terms of teaching); "approach" (seemingly referring to a rather broad manner of thinking or teaching); "formula for teaching" media literacy (thereby including specific guidelines or even steps); and even "theory" (referring to the underlying philosophy of media literacy teaching); "models" (even in the absence of a literal and graphical representation of the

teaching process) and indeed "curriculum" (meaning the contents and process of an "agenda" or "program" to be followed) are all found and used in an apparent fortuitous manner, without any explanation why that specific label is chosen for the pedagogy suggested. These terms or descriptions are used randomly by academic scholars, researchers and lecturers. Quite often, the so-called media literacy phenomenon becomes a lengthy discussion of the "perfect curriculum" as Shepherd (1995) labels it, while the primary scholar responsible for the professed "three Rs" approach in terms of reading, reviewing and reacting (to media messages) could not be found. In the final event, it was therefore imperative to propose a structured index of pedagogies, which are mentioned repeatedly in literature.

This said, it additionally needs mentioning that this phenomenon of seemingly-indiscriminate attribution of labels to these pedagogical approaches may be ascribed to the underlying importance attached to the *outcome* of media literacy, rather than the importance of the process of itself, and the many ongoing debates about the meaning of media literacy, media literacy teaching and media education. Thoman (undated) writes that "media literacy is not so much a finite body of knowledge, but rather a skill, a process, a way of thinking that, like reading comprehension, is always evolving. At the heart of media literacy is the principle of critical inquiry". She continues to say that "...several approaches to examining media texts are possible, depending on the setting and the age and educational level of the participants".

4.3.1 Conceptual analysis

While there are numerous other suggestions and the earlier-mentioned "educational packs" and "teaching plans" for media literacy teaching, the categories contained in this chapter are included, following intensive and lengthy scrutiny of available material in books, the Internet and popular magazines such as the *The Good News* (May/June 2002 Volume 7:3). It is impossible, however, to condense the existing and magnitude of possible and available approaches to this young field of study. Many of the prominent organizations mentioned above function as advisors and invite potential media literacy teachers to apply for assistance. Many of these organizations also offer

continuous seminars, workshops, and certificate and diploma courses for potential media literacy teachers and other interested parties in media literacy.

In order to select and isolate deserving teaching approaches, techniques and plans, certain criteria for selection were established, namely:

- a coherent and logical framework which is characterized by continuity and unity;
- the possibility of replication and reproduction by various teachers, stakeholders and groups;
- an approximate academic and theoretical foundation with fundamental and specific points of departure;
- the possibility of interchange between various media and media content; and
- a quasi-scientific and theoretical character, even while it may focus on popular media and content.

It is difficult to find lengthy discussions of the method of conceptual analysis in literature, possibly because various researchers see it as a sub-method of content analysis. The idea and process spring from various other theoretical and philosophical traditions, and can be applied with great success when the researcher is intent on focusing on the meaning of specific concepts by means of a procedure or process of clarifying and categorizing these concepts (Mouton 2001:175). In addition to relational analysis, Carley (1992) sees conceptual analysis "as a type of content analysis that begins with the identification of research questions, choosing a sample or samples" and during which the action of coding is performed by means of selection and reduction. The main goal of conceptual analysis is to interpret vital concepts that are used by specific groups of people (Jackson 2000: 3). An important condition for eventual success, however, is situated in the construction of clear, precise and non-ambiguous methods being applied to the initial bulk of information (Bless & Higson-Smith 2000:32).

The following eight stages or phases (described by Carley 1992) were applied to the many and various so-called teaching approaches, techniques, lesson plans, frameworks, steps, keys, strategies, theories and methods — all descriptions of non-specific pedagogical possibilities for the teaching of media literacy.

1. Deciding on level of analysis, during which all the available approaches and teaching techniques, was superficially scrutinized.
2. Deciding on how many concepts or categories to code for: in this phase, the available material was roughly categorized until no methods, frameworks or approaches remained, and this yielded 10 different categories of teaching.
3. Deciding whether to code for existence of frequencies or rather concepts; in this case the existence of concepts was taken as indicator, regardless of the frequency with which media literacy educators and scholars suggested it. (The coding was led by the central focus of the pedagogical methods, i.e. whether it deals with analysis of specific media content and/or messages, or if it rather focuses on media literacy as a goal in itself, thereby explaining the aims and process of media literacy).
4. Decide on a basis to distinguish among different concepts; in which the selection criteria for inclusion (see above paragraphs for determination of criteria for inclusion of categories) was applied.
5. Develop rules for coding the test; which also is contained in the following paragraphs.
6. Deciding what will be done with so-called "irrelevant" information: here only methods that showed up in literature at least twice were considered for incorporation into categories and the eventual matrix.
7. Coding the text; whereby the concrete analysis and categorization are performed; and
8. Analysis and discussion of the results and findings, which will occur throughout by means of a discussion of each individual teaching method or approach (see matrix on following pages).

Table 4.1: A framework for the classification of media literacy teaching approaches and techniques.

CATEGORY	Type of teaching or approach	Index number in chapter
1. Approaches focusing on an understanding of the nature, role and functions of the mass media to motivate media literacy	Eight key building-blocks or core principles by Reneé Hobbs	4.4.1
	Andrew Hart's five basic principles for media literacy teaching	4.4.2
	James Potter's four foundational ideas for the understanding of media literacy	4.4.3
	Reading the media environment as devised by Marshall McLuhan	4.4.4
	Ontological approach of John Pungente	4.4.5
2. Frameworks from where to understand media literacy and approach media literacy teaching	Len Masterman's framework of eighteen principles for media education	4.5.1
	PLAY's five governing principles of media literacy	4.5.2
3. Justification of media literacy as imperative field of study in view of media effects	Hobbs's seven great debates about media literacy	4.6
4. Comprehensive and advanced academic approaches to media literacy education	Art Silverblatt's (1995) keys to Interpreting Media Messages	4.7.1
	Art Silverblatt's (1999) advanced approaches to media literacy i.e. mythical, ideological or production	4.7.2
5. Analysis of specific media content and messages	Media Awareness Network's 13 critical questions on content/messages	4.8.1
	Medialiteracy.com by Rogers	4.8.2
	Values education [see tabel]	4.8.3
	Semiotics and semiology	4.8.4
	Inquiry model of the Ontario Ministry of Education's Media Literacy Resource Guide	4.8.5
	Scaffolding by Chavanu	4.8.6
	T.A.P by Eddie Dick	4.8.7
	The 3 Rs	4.8.8

6. Specific key-driven issues in media literacy focusing on effects e.g. texts, violence, promiscuity etc. (Potter's calls this general approach *Message-Focused Sense Making* (2001)	Case studies approaches	4.9.1
	School discourses and discussions	4.9.2
	Cary Bazalgette's framework for media text analysis	4.9.3
	Potter's methods of analysis, contrast, evaluate, abstract	4.9.4
7. Production of media messages and content	Andrew Hart	4.10.1
	Adams et al (1990)	4.10.2
8. Media literacy focusing on cultural and popular culture content	Teaching and learning about popular culture by Buckingham & Sefton-Green (1994); Tyner 2001	4.11.1
	Media literacy menu of Duncan (Association for Media Literacy)	4.11.2
	School discourses	4.11.3
9. Audience- and stakeholder focused principles, hints and approaches [e.g. for parents, churches, youth leaders, general society]	Dr Walsh's building blocks for school success in the face of the media	4.12.1
	Ten media literacy strategies by Tyner of Strategies for Media Literacy	4.12.2
	Six ways to reduce advertising in your life by Center for Media Literacy	4.12.3
	MediaQuotient	4.12.4
	Formulas for news reading (Center for Media Literacy)	4.12.5
	Adbusters (Buy Nothing Day)	4.12.6
10. Integration of media literacy into other subjects [multi-disciplined media literacy]	Project Look Sharp (University of Ithaca)	4.13.1
	Worsnop's 1994 framework of incorporation	4.13.2
	Media Literacy Resource Guide of Ontario Ministry of Education	4.13.3

4.4 Understanding the nature and role of the mass media: key principles and core building-blocks in media literacy teaching

In this section on foundations, whereby which the nature and role of the mass media institutions, its role and nature can be taught, the following approaches will be explored:

- the eight key building-blocks or concepts of media literacy, devised by Hobbs;
- five basic principles of media literacy teaching, formulated by Hart;
- four critical and foundational ideas to understand the need for media literacy as conceptualized by Potter;
- McLuhan's approach of reading the medium environment; and
- an ontological approach to media literacy teaching.

4.4.1 Eight key building-blocks or concepts of media literacy

The following fundamental building-blocks were encountered repeatedly in the literature study as popular points of departure in the media literacy education realm. Even though some of the following notions may have surfaced in earlier chapters, the following *eight key "building-blocks' or concepts* resonate throughout the media literacy discipline and body of knowledge as points of departure in the teaching of media literacy.

While apparently initially devised by Hobbs (1994), it seems from literature as if there is general agreement under most of the acknowledged media literacy educators (cf. Duncan, Chair of Ontario Ministry of Education Media Literacy Project, and his five key concepts) and organizations about the necessity for a knowledge of these fundamental aspects, regardless of the order in which they are discussed and studied. This researcher has found from personal experience in the teaching of media literacy that a theoretical explanation of the contents of these concepts are obligatory, and it is advisable that learners should find their own media examples to illustrate and apply these "concepts" to in order to fully comprehend the practical implications thereof.

A theoretical lecture on these contents can therefore not be negotiated in terms of a comprehension of the media literacy phenomenon. In terms of conative prerequisites

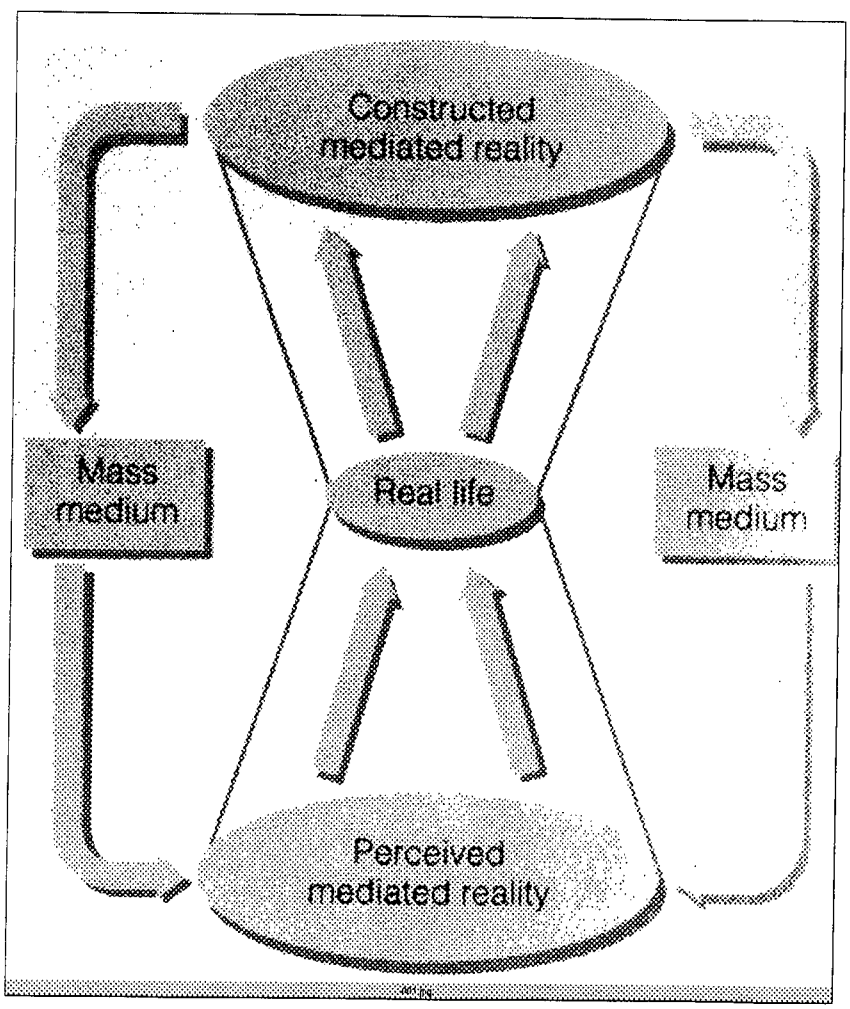
for the teaching of media literacy — which is vital to the success of the outcomes — these statements actually delivers proof to learners on the necessity of media literacy. A discussion on violence effects and implications, for example, can still be opposed in class, while the following eight concepts or "building-blocks" present the learner with undeniable facts. Tied up in these concepts are vital information about the nature, functions and ideology inherent to the mass media institutions.

- **All media are constructions and messages are also constructions of specific people's perceptions of events and subjects.** The media do not and cannot reflect reality; it can merely extend representations of reality. People make Media products with specific ends in mind. These goals will more likely be achieved if the productions have plausibility, or the appearance of reality. Even though the products may appear natural, they actually have been carefully constructed. Consumers' familiarity and the technical quality of the productions may make media messages and content seem to appear to be extensions of reality, even though it is at the most pseudo-reality.

- **The media construct reality.** Communication is tied to perception. Everyone constructs their own view of reality. All of people's experiences and frameworks of reference affect their particular constructions of the world. When a large portion of those experiences come from radio, TV, films, magazines, etc., then the media is also constructing reality, not just people themselves. The concept of mediated reality in the mass media resembles that of a cone (see Figure 4.1). It is often named the cone-effect as a result of the two cones that make up its design, and is a well-known method to examine the effects of mass media on our lives, and endeavours to model the relationship between mediated reality and real life. Real life involves and represents all life experiences that do not directly involve a mass medium. Millions of people have had and still have real-life experiences outside of the reach of any mass medium. Certain aspects of real-life experience are used by the media communicators to create constructed mediated reality (CMR, coined by McLuhan], which may consist of a radio story, big-screen film, magazine ad, newspaper report, TV show or any other media message. Although the constructed mediated reality is built on real-life situations and experiences, there are many differences besides the biggest one being that it is not real! CMR tends to be funnier, sexier, more intense, more colorful and

more violent than real life. Whetmore (1993: 12) uses an excellent example to illustrate this differentiate between real-life and mediated reality: in the TV-show *Married - with Children* "dozens of funny and entertaining things happen every half hour, but in real life we are lucky if one funny thing happens to us in an average day". Consumers actually expect CMR and the mass media to offer us things that are out of the ordinary, probably to break the monotony of their own lives – else there would be no reason to suspend real life long enough to experience mediated reality and will nobody need the mass media.

Figure 4.1: Mediated effects of media (Whetmore 1993:13)



- **All mass media compete for the attention of the audiences and their money, and therefore messages created by construction and mediation are designed to get the largest possible portion of mass following. The media are generally profit- and consumer-driven.** When the messages are transmitted to the audience, the perception of this information is called perceived mediated reality (PMR), which takes up a large portion of all people's waking hours. This process is of course highly selective and people choose what to see/hear and to retain, very often what takes the least energy from them. The final step in the process involves the relationship between PMR and real life. "We often take information gained from these mediated reality messages and apply it to our real lives – or rather try to apply it would be more accurate" (Whetmore 1993: 12). If we take an example of the teen-soap *Beverly Hills 90210,* produced by one of the richest media moguls, Aaron Spelling, this will become clearer. In this series young girls become pregnant whilst not certain of the identity of the teen father, but fortunately all of the possible candidates have sports cars and credit cards. The couple rush off to the clinic for an abortion [which the presumed father pays by credit-card] and picks up the "distressed" teen-girl again. Next day they both attend "school" or "college" as normal, groomed to perfection and pursuing new relationships. This means, at the very least, that this mediated and constructed reality cannot be applied to real life, as any abortion in reality has endless emotional and spiritual implications, besides the possible physical complications. How often will people stand kissing in the rain in movies or TV-dramas? In reality however, few people would voluntarily choose to pet whilst standing in rain.
- **Audiences negotiate meaning in the media.** Different people will have different needs, phobias, passions, racial, gender or class attitudes, or cultural backgrounds. All these things will affect our interpretation of a media product. Since each of the receivers/consumers brings different experiences with them, it is highly unlikely that two people will interpret the same media text in the same way.
- **The media always have commercial implications**. The economic and business basis of mass media productions has an effect on not just the content, but also how the content is produced and how the product is delivered to its

audience. Running a magazine, TV station or record company is a business and people must make a profit if they want to stay in business. The following hypothetical case study may explain: A publisher and editor run a newspaper and 80% of their revenue comes from cigarette ads. There is mention of reports stating that a number of studies are done linking smoking to cancer. A reporter supposedly wants to do an article on the studies. The editor needs to make a decision: Forbid them; run the story in a corner on the last page; write an editorial denouncing the studies' research methods. A lot will depend on the personal convictions and how important that cigarette revenue is to the financial well being of the paper. Idealist unbiased reporters who fight against this mentality will be overruled by an editor (or publisher) who wants to keep his/her job. Companies are unlikely to want to pay money to a newspaper that keeps criticizing them. Instead the reporter will probably start to self-censor an article by rationalizing, which can after a while become second nature. (In South Africa this specific scenario has become obsolete as cigarette advertisements have been banned from the printed media.)

- **Media globalization and privatization of information accelerates day by day**. There are a small number of rather gigantic media outlets which end up dominating the industry (e.g. *Viacom, Time-Warner, Rogers, Sony* etc, and in South Africa, *Independent OnLine, Media 24 and Independent*). As these media giants continue to incorporate their smaller competitors, fewer people making decisions on which TV shows are shown or canceled, can be employed — fostering the effect of the single gatekeeper who makes crucial decisions on behalf of the masses on issues such as the following: which musical groups get a record deal; how large a headline should be on which story; which item will lead the news; which script will try to be next summer's box office blockbuster. Considering how much information we absorb each day from the various media, the increasing concentration of media ownership has far-reaching implications for how people perceive the world and their place in it. The Western film production companies increasingly dominate the current film scene, with the result that the typical Western culture is filtering through most countries and their cultures.

- **The media contain ideological and value messages, which is related to the aspect of privatization and globalization of information**. Students should learn to decode the ideological and value messages contained within a media text. Media products can be thought of as advertisements, not just for themselves but also for a way of life. Usually the advertised way of life affirms the established social structure, which is logical if the consumer wants to have sales in said established social structure). We may be oblivious to many of the ideological messages contained within our favourite sitcom or soap opera, but people living in another culture could more likely pick them out. Some of the implicit (and sometimes explicit) messages contained in the Western cultural products are: "the nature of the good life" and how money relates to it, the "proper" role for women, authority should be respected and accepted without question, the virtues of consumerism, and what's good for business is good for everyone else. Should one however consider the typical African culture, these stipulations may differ, where individualism, for example, is quite the opposite of collectivist perspectives of black tribes of South Africa.
- **The media have social and political implications**. For example, how has the arrival of television into nearly everyone's life affected family and leisure time? The media may not create values, but they can make them seem legitimate and reinforce them. Is someone considered an outsider from a group if they listen to a different type of music or wear different clothes? On a grander scale, a prime minister or president may be elected solely because they have a better television image than their opponent. Television may also help stimulate people to aid people suffering on the other side of the globe (Media Awareness Network 2002).

The above teaching approach has been tried and found to be extremely valuable, serving as a point of departure into the discipline of media literacy. It is sufficiently advanced for tertiary learners, but still contain basic and fundamental information about the mass media. It forms a valuable contribution to the knowledge component of media literacy education, specifically with an aim to motivate the need for media literacy, as will be later seen in the proposed model for South African media literacy teaching.

4.4.2 Andrew Hart's five basic principles of media literacy teaching

Andrew Hart, arguably England's media literacy trump-card together with Len Masterman, believes that any basic understanding of media literacy and teaching must start with the following five principles (1997: 8):

- The media do not simply reflect or replicate the world but reconstruct reality.
- Selection, compression and elaboration occur at every point in the complex process of editing and presenting images.
- Audiences are never passive and predictable but active and variable in their responses.
- Messages are not solely determined by producers' and editors' decisions, nor by governments, advertisers and media moguls.
- The mass media contain a multiplicity of different forms shaped by different technologies, languages and capacities.

It is clear that any media educated person should, at the very least, be aware of these five principles. Anyone who take cognizance of these facts or statements, will realize that there are countless other variables which can affect the relationship between the media and the media consumer, such as the specific state an audience member finds him- or herself in when buying/using a medium; or that there are various role-players and stake-holders involved in the process of media advertising. What rules are applicable to one medium, may differ from another — hence McLuhan's urgings that the "medium is both the message and the massage" (1964: 211; see 4.4.4). As a basic theoretical introduction to a course in media literacy, the above principles can be easily explained and applied with great effect.

4.4.3 James Potter's four critical and foundational ideas to understand the need for media literacy

According to Potter (2001), there are four foundational ideas which are critical to understanding and approaching the discipline of **media literacy**:

- Media literacy is a continuum on which there are degrees of media literacy, not a category. Just as very few people will be completely illiterate with regard to the media – even if only knowing how to turn a radio on and off – there will be virtually no people with a perfect degree of media literacy where they could learn no more about any of the mediums or messages. A person with a low grade of media

literacy will interact mindlessly with the mass media, whereas a person who is highly media literate will be extremely mindful during exposure to mass messages, often cynical and skeptic about what they see and hear.

- Media literacy needs to be developed by means of processes of maturation and conscious practices. This is also valid with reference to emotional maturity. (See Potter's table of development in this regard in Table 2.1, page 108).
- Media literacy is multi-dimensional. There are the cognitive, emotional, aesthetic and moral dimensions, each one again on a continuum of development.
- The ultimate purpose of media literacy is to give us more control over interpretations, since all media messages are merely interpretations of other people such as journalists, producers, advertisers, actors and entertainers.

While these building-blocks are not in itself media literacy knowledge components and skills, it represents well-motivated reasons for the need of media literacy teaching, particularly to illustrate the effect and even power of the media. It does, however, seem to support an approach to the media from an angle of criticism, implied censorship and partial abolishment, which is not the main purpose of media literacy outcomes and education. It may still be valuable to mention these "rules of the game" to new media literacy learners in order to explain that there is no set and ultimate outcome or destination in media literacy, but that it is rather a process of becoming human; a process of "seeking social justice" (Stocker 2002). By means of this process of media literacy development, students will become able to maintain a critical distance of popular culture and to resist manipulation because of increased knowledge (corresponding with civic courage, cf. 3.8.5).

4.4.4 Reading the medium environment (or "the medium is the message")

This approach was essentially the product of Marshall McLuhan, who claimed that each medium of communication has its own biases and ideology, and explains why he preferred to refer to "media analysis" (McLuhan, Hutchon & McLuhan 1977). When we interact with a medium of communication, said McLuhan, we are influenced as much by the form of the medium as by its message. To explore this notion further, learners should ask the following questions about each communication medium: *What would life be like without this medium?*

Finding answers to the following questions, "invented" by McLuhan, might also help people to better understand the effects of their interactions with our media of communication:

- How does it work (e.g., technically, physiologically)?
- When/how was it discovered/invented?
- How did its use develop (e.g., socially, economically, and politically)?
- Who are its outstanding users? What do they communicate? How?
- What are the medium's present conventions? How did they develop?
- What are its present limitations? How are they best exploited?
- How does the medium affect its users and how do they affect it?
- How have other media affected this one?

These questions are extremely suitable to teaching on the nature, characteristics and role of the mass medium under discussion. It is advisable to supply students with copies of newspapers and magazines in the case of the printed media, whilst a radio, television and the Internet in class facilitates the teaching of these questions.

4.4.5 Ontological approaches

One of the popular albeit advanced approaches to practical media education in Canada, and specifically Ontario's classrooms, is an ontological process in which students' relationships with fantasy, reality, the supernatural, the religious or spiritual, one another and the world can be addressed. This method can compare both the values of the learner as well as that appearing in media messages. By first identifying and then analyzing/examining value messages in different genres and formats, learners become able to examine and prioritize their own values as a result. Media education then serves another function, namely enhancement of consumer awareness, values and ethical judgment. Through an understanding of marketing concepts such as psychographics, demographics and market segmentation, learners can come to understand the role that the mass media play in the own lives as well as in the upholding of the socio-economic system and ideological systems (Pungente 1994).

Another general approach or point of departure is the issue of citizenship (see 3.8.5 for article on *civic courage and critical citizenship*). What do learners think makes good

citizens? This question once again however relates also to the so-called Values Approach or Values Education (see 4.8.3). What are the types of questions good citizens ask about the mass media and communication? What is the general identity of a South African citizen? What is his or her culture and denominating aspects? Are there any sub-cultures, and how do they fit into the local and global communities? Pungente (1994) stresses the fact that whatever approach is taken, authenticity and reality are the keys to relevant learning, which means that the media texts under consideration must have interest and relevance in students' lives. In fact, high authenticity is a prerequisite for all curricula and learning and can be achieved optimally in media students – all it requires is a teacher who is aware of and sensitive to students' maturity and capability to think critically and originally; a teacher who does not judge learners with differing or even rebellious opinions, and who can refrain from ever critizising and ridiculing others.

Personal experience about ontological issues is that it will naturally surface as a matter of course during the teaching of media literacy classes when dealing with specific media content analysis, regardless of the methods of discussion or analysis. It can be incorporated in various of the other specific approaches. This perspective may be one of the reasons why sporadic mentioning of the mass media can be found in the context of the human and social sciences and life-skills programs in South African schools, which are seemingly however limited to two sessions per curriculum per year (personal interview with Mr D'Olivera, curriculum head of FS Provincial Education Department). The learners however always enjoy these ontological types of questions as it liberates them to venture even divergent opinions without any fear of being "wrong" or "bad", "good" or "weak".

4.5 Orientational frameworks for media literacy education

Orientational frameworks which will be discussed in this part, include:

- Masterman's eighteen principles of media education, and
- PLAY (Kidsplay.org) and their five "governing principles" of the media.

4.5.1 Masterman's eighteen principles of media education

Masterman's book, *Teaching the Media (*1985) is viewed by many as the seminal text for Grade 12 [K-12] teachers. Masterman (see Appendix D.10) sees the following principles as basic for any country, group or person starting a media literacy project and movement, and insists that the successful teaching of media literacy depends on a comprehension of these principles:

- Media literacy and education is a serious and significant endeavour, because it is about the empowerment of majorities and the strengthening of society's democratic structures.
- The symbolic media mediate and represent reality — they do not reflect it — by means of symbolic and sign systems. From this basic insight all further actions and thinking flows.
- Media education and literacy are lifelong processes and require high motivation from everyone involved.
- Media education should foster critical intelligence and thinking but most importantly critical autonomy.
- Media education and literacy is investigative in nature, and does not seek to impose specific cultural values.
- Media education is topical and opportunistic, by illuminating the life-situations of the learners and pupils. It can apply the "here-and-now" in the context of wider historic, ideological and cultural issues and values.
- Media education's tools are analytical rather than applying alternative content or censorship.
- With media education, content is a means to an end, and the end is development of analytical tools rather than alternative content again.
- The effectiveness of media education and literacy can be evaluated by the ability of students to apply the newly acquired critical thinking skills to new situations and messages and the amount of commitment and motivation displayed by learners.
- Evaluation in media education is based on self-evaluation, formative as well as summative.
- Media education ideally changes the relationship between tutor/teacher and learner by involving both in reflection and dialogue, and class discussions.
- Dialogue and communication are vital to media education and investigation follows a route of dialogue rather than discussion.
- Media education is active and participatory, fostering more open and democratic

dialogue. It involves the learner in original and independent ways.

- Media education avoids collaborative learning and is group-focussed. Competition is not encouraged but group insights and resources are stimulated.
- Media education consists of both practical criticism and critical practice. It emphasises cultural criticism over cultural reproduction.
- Media education is holistic in nature, thus forging relationships with all stakeholders and role-players e.g. parents, teachers and media professionals.
- Media education aims at continuous change, in sync with continuously changing reality around people.
- Underpinning media education is a distinctive epistemology (Strategies Quarterly Spring 1990).

It is possible that any prospective media literacy teacher or facilitator, who becomes involved with the subject without a fundamental background in mass communication and the mass media, will be encouraged and assisted by the above inestimable guidelines. Media literacy viewed as it is envisioned here, is an exhilarating experience for both the teacher and learners, and has the innate potential to bring complete new ways of teaching, communication and thinking into the classroom by using the media and its contents as vehicles (see also De Bono's in 5.6, and Bloom's taxonomy in 4.8.5 ideas for stimulation of critical thinking in a media literacy course for tertiary students). It also makes it very clear that media education/literacy is never about media abolishment and censorship, but rather consuming media contents from a very open-minded, analytical and critical disposition. It does not mean never to watch soaps, but rather indicates that continuous questioning and evaluation should be applied to the genre, for example. Most possibly, a critical viewer will automatically evolve to self-applied selection when he/she understands the context of soaps, and stop watching it as his or her taste is evolving.

4.5.2 Five governing principles from PLAY (Project Literacy Among Youth) organized by *Kidsplay.org* (undated, online)

Once again, media literacy is presented by means of certain mass media and audience principles – in this case five – of understanding as a means to approach media literacy education. Whenever any person begins to comprehend these principles, a measure of

media literacy is already in position as a foundation and fundamental knowledge. If any person doubts the existence of the study discipline and academic field of inquiry, or even the validity of it being a potential curriculum, a debate on these principles can accomplish the eventual goal of media literacy — critical thinking about the mass media, its content and its effects.

- **Audiences actively interpret media.** Meaning does not reside in messages itself, but is a product of interaction between text and audience (or communicator and receiver). Many situational aspects such as age, class, gender, geography and culture influence the decoding of messages. The key to media literacy would be to educate people to be aware of their own subjectivity in the transactional process of communication as well as the subjectivity of the communicator/s of the mass media messages.
- **All media are constructions** which are carefully constructed products by the communicators who compete for the attention and money of the consumer. A newspaper headline is carefully constructed; so are documentaries about controversial products. These messages will inevitably contain some of the leanings and prejudices of the communicators involved in the process of communication [encoding] and construction. Even the most realistic images still represent the communicator's – the text-writer, editor, actor, producer or director – interpretation of reality.
- **All media are owned** by institutions or individuals that find themselves in a particular historical and social context, which may not be known, to the general public. Commercial institutions are founded and operated on profit- and consumer-driven reasons, ultimately operating according to motivations that will generate the highest profit.
- **All media express values.** The communicators/producers also operate from a specific social, gender, cultural and life perspectives of people, places, events and ideas. Relevant questions can be: Whose story is told, whose story is left out, whose reality is told?
- **All media adhere to codes and conventions** which can be described as the language of the medium and which becomes apparent through editing, narration, sequencing, camera angles, choices of music and timing. The medium language and nature influence the meaning of the text.

These five questions are obviously derived from the first approach in this section, the so-called key-concepts or "building-blocks", that can be viewed as prerequisites for the comprehension of the need for media literacy. It remained problematic to ascertain which media literacy advocate or organization first "coined" these important principles, but it is believed to be Hobbs). These issues are suitable to the teaching of a cognitive content class in media literacy, and have the added benefit that learners can find their own means and examples to motivate it. It does, however, seem like a watered-down version of the initial eight key concepts of Hobbs (see 4.4.1), and from the side-line it also seems as if various media literacy front-runners have adjusted and adapted the original approaches, while submitting this adapted "formula" as their own.

4.6. The seven great debates in the media literacy world, summarized by Hobbs

Although the following aspects of Hobbs (see Appendix A for brief biography) could just as easily be classified under **reasons and justifications** for media literacy, I have found that a posing of these questions to learners as a point of departure to a media literacy class serves as an excellent genesis to critical thinking, and can thus be categorized as an independent potential approach to a basic and fundamental start to the teaching of media literacy. These so-called "seven great debates" will explain many of the questions learners may raise about the mission, values and belief systems underlying media education and media literacy. Until learners can understand the fundamental argumentation behind these issues, media literacy teaching just may be futile. Obviously the learners' answers to these questions need to be motivated and justified at all times, which actually forms the crux of media literacy education — critical thinking about the mass media and its contents.

- **Does/Can media literacy protect children and young people?**

  Can media literacy help transform a deeply flawed culture, being an "antidote for a culture where we continue to amuse ourselves to death, where information has replaced knowledge, where style has replaced substance, where violence is the major form of entertainment, and where we let technology drive the quality of our lives without reflection or analysis"? (Buckingham 1994). This distinguished UK media literacy educator, however, questions if children should indeed be seen as

defenseless victims who need to be rescued from the excesses and evils of their culture, which is simply the intersection of high technology, mass media and consumer capitalism at the end of the 20th century. He suggests that by focusing on the problematic features of the mass media, we neglect children's emotional engagement with the media and the genuine pleasures they receive and instead substitute cynicism and superiority over real questioning and analysis. He is of the opinion that children and young people may not need to be protected at all, just invited to participate in analytic discourse about media as an institution, and its contents – a typical example of media literacy.

- **Does/should media literacy require student media production activities?**

Hobbs is of the opinion "that young people cannot become truly critical viewers until they have had experience making photographs, planning and organizing ideas through storyboards, writing scripts and performing in front of a camera, or designing their own web page, or reporting a news story. According to this view, media literacy is incomplete unless students get a lot of experience "writing" as well as "reading"." South Africa in this specific matter may present a problematic context to establish media literacy if it depends on this former condition, and production activities require too much time for 45- or 50- minute lectures; it requires the execution of more skills than can be reasonably expected from the average teacher, as well as good resources and finances. In American schools, media production is often the province of the non-readers, the low-ability kids for whom media production is the 'last chance' before dropping out. (Medialit.org 2002).

- **Should media literacy have a popular culture bias?**

One side of this argument is about the recognition that the concepts and skills embedded in media literacy are about the analysis of all the ways humans share meaning. Understanding that information is socially constructed is the major contribution of media literacy — and this can be learned through the analysis of classic works of literature and film just as well as through a close examination of Beavis and Butthead if you believe that media literacy must be centrally connected to the popular cultural texts that are at the center of students' "first curriculum" (Hobbs 2001). There are educators, however, according to Hobbs in this particular article, who becomes "ill to even think of a high school class actually

watching and talking about Beavis and Butthead in school ... or if you hated studying Jonathan Livingston Seagull or Simon and Garfunkel lyrics in your high school English class. The earlier literature in Chapter 2 (see 2.5.7) however points out to a substantial inclusion of popular media content into the media literacy curriculum or syllabus.

- **Should media literacy have a stronger ideological agenda?**

Many people are severely disturbed by the simplistic and popular rhetoric of media literacy, which seems to be designed to have something-for-everyone, with no apparent ideological agenda concerning education reform, broadcast regulation, commercialism in the classroom, media ownership and centralization, racism, sexism, and other social injustices. Ideally, media literacy must be seen as a tool for educational, social and political change in society. There is however, the opposing perspective that media literacy can serve a wide variety of ideological masters, from folks in the Bible Belt helping students understand how inhumanity and violence masquerades as humour, to progressive educators leading students to understand that the insanity of advertising makes people feel inadequate, so that they will buy products they do not need (Hobbs 1998).

- **Can media literacy ever reach large numbers of students in any country's education system?**

If one supports the belief that schools, as institutions designed to conserve and maintain the social status quo, are unlikely to change within the next twenty years in the fairly dramatic ways that media literacy would require, the notion of media literacy seems an ideal and romantic ambition. Instead of reading eight classic novels in the 10th grade, students would now read four [popular] books, study two contemporary films, a news magazine and design a web site. Media literacy can be taught masterfully by means of after-school programs, summer camps, religious education programs, library and prevention programs, in community-based organizations, and at home with parental guidance. The matter of educators, being trained language, arts, social studies, health, science, music and art teachers, must be introduced to and equipped with strategies for integrating media literacy across the curriculum, can never be underestimated. Many schools, particularly in South Africa but also internationally, are chronically under-funded, have poor integration of technology in general, have increasingly smaller

staff development budgets, where teachers are cynical about adding yet another new thing while still battling with Curriculum 2005. Again a serious implication is forced onto supporters: recognizing that implementing media literacy will realistically mean that less time is spent on other subjects — literature, foreign languages, calculus, and geography — although some even believe that time spent learning about media will enrich these subjects instead of diminish them (Hobbs 1998).

- **Should media literacy initiatives be supported financially by media corporations?**

Funds come with strings attached, and Hobbs (1998) points out that the *National Cable Television Association, the Discovery Channel* and the *Newspaper Association of America* are cleverly taking advantage of educators who are so under-funded and desperate for materials that they will agree to anything that is provided freely. Others, once again, maintain that media organizations are effectively taking the "anti-media" stand out of the media literacy movement to serve their own goals. The media industry can co-opt the media literacy movement, softening it to make sure that public criticism of the media never gets too loud, abrasive or strident. The cable and newspaper industries can nevertheless use their "large megaphones to help raise awareness about the value of media literacy skills" (Hobbs 1998). Media organizations have a social responsibility to help people develop critical thinking about the media as a kind of consumer skills.

- **Is media literacy optimally used when applied as a means to an end?**

According to Hobbs (1998), many of the media literacy advocates believe that "media literacy is most valuable because of its potential to change the worst aspects of media culture, to improve the quality of television, to revitalize American journalism, to change the nature of American public education, to get people to re-think their relationship with commodity culture." These educators teach media literacy as part of a strategy to end violence, to stop sexism or racism, to prevent kids from ruining their futures with drug or alcohol abuse. Media literacy would still be worth teaching and learning even if it had no impact on changing the quality of public education or the quality of mass media, if it didn't improve people's lifestyle decision-making, if it had no impact on how young

people see themselves in sexist, racially constructed social roles. Realists on the other hand, are of the conviction that media literacy might be a valuable skill in and of itself, that simply learning to make media messages and to always ask questions about what you watch, see and read is inherently valuable. This reflects on the communication and cultural aspects of media literacy, which both are inherent ingredients about all peoples' lives and cannot be negotiated away.

Although these so-called "debate" points may seem uncomplicated at a first glance, it becomes more difficult when learners have to motivate their answers. In itself, this method holistically contribute to the development of media literacy, which are always developed in increments as the learner's understanding of the media develops. A condition in class will be that the learners are actually frequently exposed to the mass media, and often this author makes the purchase of a newspaper such as Mail and Guardian *compulsory, or even show a video of a contemporary film or television documentary/soap/drama in class, which is compulsory for all registered learners.*

4.7 Analysis of specific media content and messages

The focus will be put on the following teaching methods and techniques in this part:

- the Media Awareness Network's 13 critical questions;
- Medialiteracy.com, a so-called clearinghouse for media literacy websites and information, and their eight questions, very much like that of the Media Awareness Network's;
- values education, a broad framework of and approach to teaching;
- semiotics and semiology as an approach to the analysis of media messages;
- the inquiry model;
- scaffolding, a traditional teaching approach;
- the TAP-model of Dick (as mentioned in the Introduction in 1.3), and
- the three Rs.

4.7.1 The Media Awareness Network's 13 critical questions

This organization (2002) proposes thirteen (13) specific questions to be asked all the

time whilst children (audiences or learners) are viewing or reading the mass media. These questions can be limited to the following, but can also expand to focus on specific content or types of media. (The augmentation of the question in brackets has been added by the researcher, as the approach is merely explained in terms of the brief questions.)

- What story will be told or reported? (A drama, fiction, romance, action or adventure, for example.)
- From whose perspective will it be presented? (The author, the producer, the main actor, an innocent bystander or an objective journalist. There could be other possibilities also, of course.)
- How will it be filmed (camera placement, movement, framing? Professionally with a good camera team, amateurish, one-sided, bad lightning?)
- How will it be edited? (Will it be good editing, or do you miss some parts that have been excluded?)
- What sort of music will be used, if any? (Sad, exciting, classical, noisy ... try and imagine some classical music in a cowboy movie, for example!)
- What voices will we hear? (Will it be dubbed as in animation films, or will it be the actors' voices themselves?)
- What will the intended message be? (To inform, entertain, to comment and influence you?)
- Who has created the images? (Is it a large production house, or an independent news crew, for example?)
- Who is doing the speaking? (A commentator, real people?)
- Whose viewpoint is *not* heard? (Is the story objective and are all sides of the story included? Is it therefore balanced and accurate?)
- From whose perspective does the camera frame events? (The producer's and editor's, most likely.)
- Who owns the medium? (Rich people, large conglomerates and monopolies.)
- What is our role as spectators? (Should we become drawn in? Must we strive to be objective? Is it only for entertainment, or do we get some other messages as well?)

What is beneficial about these questions, is the fact that they can be applied to any type of medium content, e.g. newspapers, television, film or magazines to mention but a few.

The super-imposure between these questions, and the previous so-called ***basic approach*** *[description by this researcher] becomes visible at first glance. This lecturer, who found it extremely applicable on all year-levels of media literacy and media studies, has tested this approach/method. Although these questions initially seem very easy and basic in nature, they are not always equally simple to answer as the selected media format and text progresses and develops. It is therefore recommended that the media messages selected for analysis and practical teaching should progress gradually: for example from an advertisement such as for cigarettes or alcoholic beverages (where the method and 13 questions are tried) to more complicated media texts and formats.*

4.7.2 Medialiteracy.com

This basic approach by ***Medialiteracy.com*** is a non-profit website maintained by Susan Rheas Rogers. She follows the approach that media literacy does not give complete and direct answers, but that it rather teaches people how to *ask the right questions and think critically, without necessarily arriving at specific set and correct answers.* The following questions are in essence a very fundamental and easy approach and can be applied to any format and content in the mass media, and was compiled as a result of the opinions of many media literacy organizations and teachers featured on this website.

- Who created this message and why are they sending it?
- What techniques are being used to attract my attention (audio, visual, form, format)?
- What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in the message?
- What content, methods, and/or techniques does the producer use to make the message believable?
- How might different people understand this message differently from me?
- Who makes money from the message?
- What is left out of this message? (Medialiteracy.com 2002).

These basic questions, while simple enough to be comprehend by uninitiated media literacy students, covers a range of aspects and addresses various matters pertaining to the ideology as well as content of the mass media. It can be applied to either very simple messages such as advertisements, or to complicated media texts such as

popular films, docudramas or even news broadcasts. It is seemingly condensed from various other suggested approaches to media literacy, and covers a broad landscape.

4.7.3 Values education

The content and formats of the mass media are ideal resources for the discussion of moral dilemmas, the development of moral reasoning, and the use of techniques such as values clarification. *Dialogical reasoning*, which has been described as an important part of critical thinking, can play a significant role in discussions of topics such as the pros and cons of the mass media, government control of media, censorship, advertising, and the moral values identified in popular television and films (see school discourses and class discussions under 4.9.2).

The values table (see page 227) and contents may be applied to great effect in the watching of specific formats of the mass media, such as Big Brother, Survivor, sit-coms, soaps, films, advertisements, and the general content of niche and consumer magazines and newspapers. An example in this case would be the recent upsurge in three main categories of films:

- teenager films in which the dominant motive and purpose is for teenagers between the ages of 13 and 16 to lose their virginity as it is the so-called *norm [Can't hardly wait, American Pie, Sugar and Spice, 200 Cigarettes*; *Ten things I hate about you*];
- to get an identity by means of a relationship with a specific person at all costs, just to see these romantic notions go down in flames and be resurrected promptly by the entrance of another perfect soul-mate; and
- the last about the successful completion of heists by one or several criminals, where these lawbreakers are eventually admired and supported by most of the viewers [*Ocean's Eleven, The Score, Sweet Revenge, Bandits, Corky Romano*].

The approach whereby values are evaluated, can be applied equally successful to other of media genres, such as children's programmes, infotainment and music lyrics e.g. rap. Learners enjoy this approach, since it enables them to ascribe their own perceptions and understanding to the units of analysis. It stimulates discussion and even debate,

and once learners have become confident enough to realize that their even divergent opinions can also be valid, the popularity of the approach and teaching technique increases. The assessor should however be very sensitive in terms of the selection of the media messages for analysis, since it can become problematic if learners differ dramatically with regard to political, ethnical, cultural and ideological frameworks. This however teaches learners from different cultures more about one another, was the general comment.

Essentially critical thinking refers to a "body of intellectual skills and abilities that enable one to decide rationally what to believe or do" (Ennis 1996), while it also involve values, since decisions in view of circumstances should be made, for which responsibility should be carried. If media content is applied with critical-thinking and values education approaches, learners need to call on their life frameworks, which also stimulates lateral or dialogical thinking. The benefit of this type of approach applied to the media, is indeed that it involves cognitive (or intellectual), emotional or affective, behavioural and moral decisions. (See table for possible values education on the following page.)

Table 4.2: Value "units" which can be applied for analysis during the teaching of media literacy focused on values, personal and societal. Adapted from the Media Awareness Network (undated, online).

UNIT OF ASSESSMENT	POSITIVE VALUE	NEGATIVE VALUE
Images of people	Positive images, good role models	Negative images, stereotypes
Male and female role models	Stable people who can be trusted and who treat one another kindly	Unstable, sometimes violent people who treat each other badly
Sense of empowerment	Wide range of behaviors shown, where males and females can be strong, autonomous or powerful	Narrow range of behaviors is shown, with males are generally the strong, autonomous and powerful individuals, females often weak and dependent
Behavior rewarded	Constructive behavior	Destructive behavior
Sense of empowerment	Children are shown being successful	Empowerment is shown through the use of weapons and violence
Effect on language development	Supports language development	Ignores language development
Promoting curiosity, learning	Encourages curiosity and interest in learning	Allows for little imaginative activity or discovery
Developmental appropriateness	Developmental level is important - incorporated into program content	Developmental level might not be considered in program content
Promoting understanding of differences among people	Exposes children to diverse people and places, showing how people can respect and learn from one another	Promotes suspicion and intolerance (bad guys look and act differently)
Promoting a sense of morality	Demonstrates situations in which characters face a moral dilemma and need to figure out the right thing to do	One-dimensional characters with bad people who deserve to be hurt; violence is justified to resolve conflict
Promoting meaningful play	Provides meaningful life experiences to use in play.	Reflects the thought and imagination of adults

4.7.4 Semiotics/semiology

The semiotic approach, according to Curry (1999), amongst others, is applicable "when concepts of semiotic theories [are] adapted to teaching various forms of media literacy" and "offer useful approaches to examining media texts as embodiments of a society's myths, ideologies and hegemonic struggles". Curry proceeds by saying that the "semiotics theories point to a more subtle, complicated and perhaps rewarding approach to media literacy teaching that goes beyond critique to add an increased understanding of various cultures" (1999).

The historic strands of this discipline originated with John Locke, whilst modern semiological analysis started with De Saussure and Saunders Pierce (Berger 1982:16; also in Berger 1991). Semiotics is the science of signs and is concerned primarily with how meaning is generated in film, television, and other works of art. It is concerned with what signs are and the ways that information is encoded in them. Some of the decoding/deconstructing activities in this guide use strategies from semiotics.

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Opposed to McLuhan's views that the media forms themselves create the primary impact of mass communication, semiotics makes a sharp distinction between a medium and its content (Littlejohn 1999: 330). Content, in the context of semiotics, depends on the "reading" given to it by the producer [communicator] or consumer [receiver]. Semiotics focuses on the ways producers create signs and the ways audiences understand those signs, and how signs are used to interpret events and it is this focus on signs in the message that forms this area of study. It thus also becomes a tool to analyze the content of media messages (cf. Du Plooy in Fourie 2001b: 3 and Sonderling in Fourie 2001b: 105; also compare classical discourse analysis).

Semiotics is the classical science of signs, a sign being anything that can be used to represent or stand for something else (cf. Eco & Marmo (Eds.) 1989). A facial expression is a sign. Hair colour can be a sign, such as blonde women often seem to be. Words are signs, everything are signs and "people are sign-generating, sign-interpreting animals" . Semiotics attempts to analyze the way people use signs and to explain how these signs function. A film or television program, a magazine or newspaper, is all collections or systems of signs. Not only the words, but also the setting, costuming, lighting, editing and camera shots are signs that communicate messages to audiences and consumers (Hiebert et al 1991: 476).

Semiology is concerned, primarily, with how meaning is generated in "texts" [films, television programs and other works of art. It deals with what signs are and how they function. When we apply them to media analysis we are dealing with codes, formulas and the language of television. Metaphor and metonymy are often mixed together and sometimes a given object might have both metaphoric and metonymic significance. People carry codes around in their heads, highly complex patterns of associations that enable them to interpret metonymic communication correctly. "Just as you cannot tell the players without a program, you cannot understand the meaning of most things without knowing the codes" (Sardar & Van Loon 2000: 13, 14).

Because of the fact that messages can elicit numerous meanings, a text can be understood in a variety of ways – suggesting then that communication, in the sense that meaning was to be shared, did not take place (see 3.2.2). Audience reactions are

never random, and producers in fact go to great lengths to predict and examine the responses and reactions to signs by the audience. Whatever the reaction may be, it is made by the associations that audience members attach to the signs. The actions of denotation and connotation are both also central to the world of semiotics; denotation signifying the absolute designation of something and connotation are the abstract assessments originating in feelings and judgments. The meaning of a message is thus also affected by events outside the message. Although the signs in the text are important to create and shape meaning, there are also numerous non-textual influences, which can determine the meaning that any individual will take from the text. An example of extra-codes or outside factors that can influence meaning, is "overcoding" (Littlejohn 1999: 333).

A semiological analysis of the medium of television could include the following aspects and variables (Berger 1982: 41).

A Isolate and analyze the important signs in your text.
What are important signifiers and what do they signify?
What is the system that gives these signs meaning?
What codes can be found?
What ideological and sociological matters are involved?

B What is the paradigmatic structure of the text?
What is the central opposition in the text?
What paired opposites fit under the various categories?
Do these oppositions have any psychological or social import?

C What is the syntagmatic structure of the text?
How does the medium of television affect the text?
What kind of shots, camera angles and editing techniques are used?
How are lighting, color music and sound used to give meaning to signs?

D What contributions have theorists made that can be applied?

James Potter (1997: 64 – 82) views the following semiotic skills as basic and rudimentary to any course of media literacy. This researcher however is of the opinion that this method is an advanced technique, which can only be applied after a fundamental insight into the mass media, has been established.

Component skills

Exposure skills

Symbol recognition

Pattern recognition

Matching meaning

Process skills

Advanced skills

Message-focused skills

Analysis of statistics, ecological fallacies, the causal effects, the halo effect and false predictors.

Comparison and contrast

Evaluation

Abstraction

Message-extending skills

Appreciation

While semiotics and semiology may appear to be intellectually demanding and somewhat abstract, it can yield many rewards for the dedicated media teacher. (Berger 1982:15). The similarities between certain techniques of media analysis and semiotics are striking. The semiotic approach however can be advanced and should be reserved for learners who are well conversed in the concept and processes of media literacy. Appreciation of the media in terms of genres or content or quality, can, for example, also develop after considerable exposure to various qualities of media content. The potential for a simplified approach is however considerable, and can be applied with great success. However, learners did not express excitement about this approach, as it reminded them apparently of language courses.

4.7.5 The Inquiry Model

The widely-accepted and propagated *Inquiry Model of the Ontario Ministry of Education* (*Media Literacy Resource Guide*) is a structured framework that will help students recognize basic issues and provide strategies for developing subject content. This model helps to stimulate open questioning and encourages students to be intellectually curious about the world; it also demands that they have the proper tools for meaningful

research and discussion. Since many of the topics that interest students (e.g., censorship, bias in news coverage, popular culture trends) need to be focused as soon as possible, this methodology is ideally suited to studies of the media, with media literacy as an eventual outcome (Ontario Ministry of Education 2001).

Alvermann and Hagood (2000b: 436) urge media literacy educators to be open to the possibility of welcoming some elements of adolescent fan culture and popular culture into the classroom. Examining "fandom" or popular culture with learners may provide much information about how students build meaning from their personal interests, thus giving teachers an insight into students' constructed identities and should prompt interest in critical media literacy instruction. Teachers need to respect the pleasure adolescents derive from "fandom" while also involving them in a deeper understanding of what "fandom" really means. (This approach might be aptly illustrated by means of a reference to the nomination by the media world of the most influential person for 2001: Brittney Spears, 20 years old and having had breast implants, income for the year $390 million, singing pop music to raving teenagers, specifically young girls. Compared to the impact of Osama bin Laden on world politics and economy, one might be inclined to doubt the motivation behind this nomination.)

The inquiry model is especially suited to the introduction of media-literacy activities in the tertiary classroom. For example, one can easily apply the model to a provocative short film, a television documentary, or an excerpt from a feature-film video that reveals a powerful moral dilemma. Through an intense shared experience that raises a whole range of issues, students are enabled to see the value of a structured framework for facilitating focused research and critical thinking (Ontario Ministry Resource Document 1979).

The inquiry model might be typically used in the South African context, for example, to explore the following question: "Why do South Africans seem to prefer American media?" The following alternative issues and potential solutions might be investigated:

- media content, from films to television, is predominantly American in origin.
- American programs are generally cheaper to buy; have better production values, which reflect lavish budgets; and have a faster pace than do most Canadian programs.
- quality South African programs may reflect identity, but most South Africans'

indifference about or insecurity in this area compels them to avoid endeavours that hold up the mirror to their society. Intense competition in the world ensures that only the most salable commercial products are seen, which are mostly produced in Hollywood.

The crux of media literacy is situated in critical thinking and inquiry. This author found the learners surprisingly resourceful with reference to the generation of new topics for discussion and creative observations that can be discussed with positive effect. It empowers students to raise their own questions and opinions, and emboldens them increasingly with personal knowledge contents and skills, which is one of the ideals of media literacy to stimulate democratic thinking and creativity, as well as divergent and not mass thinking and opinion.

4.7.6 Scaffolding

This approach, devised by media educator Bakari Chavanu (2001a; 2001b), consists of a unit of study which is developed through a set sequence of steps. It involves the following steps:

- Providing students with an overall picture of what will be eventually expected from them.
- Breaking up and sequencing the order in which the various concepts, skills, and applications of skills will be taught and assessed.
- Students need to understand what is being taught and are required to complete parts of the project.
- In the final product, the students demonstrate their understanding, which is evaluated by both educators and peers.

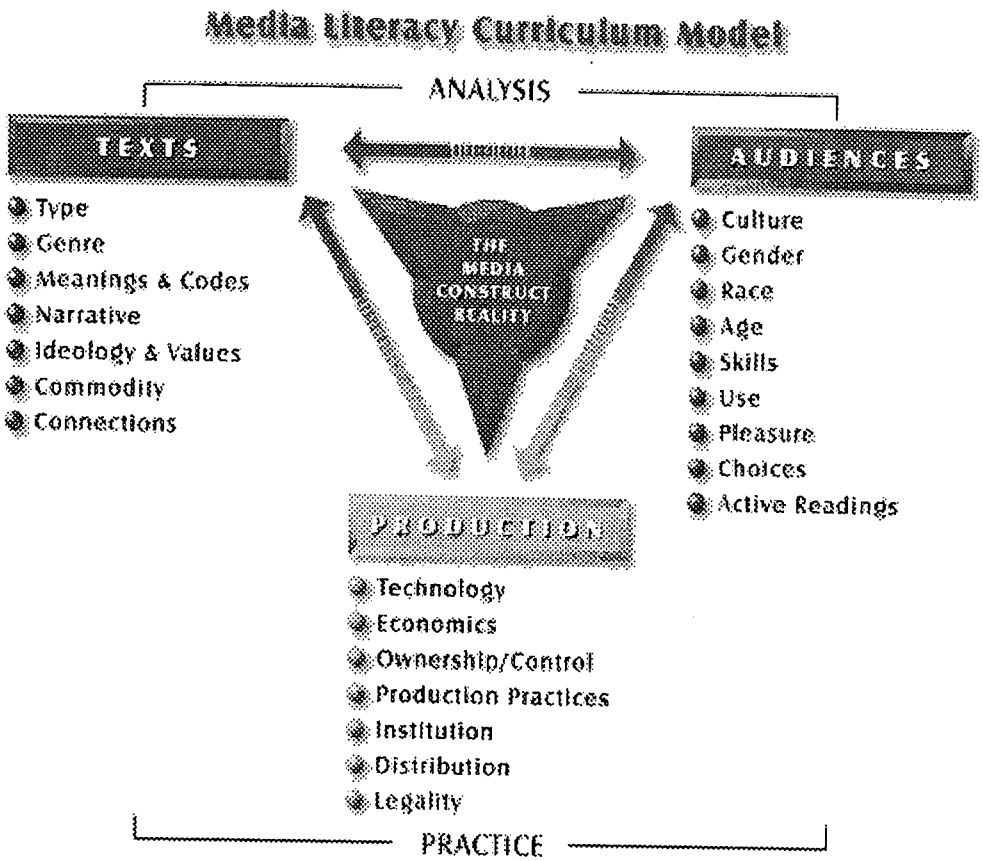
This approach approximates the outcome-based education of the current South African schooling system and can thus easily be adapted to media education. It is quite applicable as a means of teaching, but whether it is really an exclusive method of media literacy education, is debatable. In this author's opinion, these issues are interwoven into good all teaching, regardless of the subject. In this manner, decision-making, problem solution, reflective thought and critical thought which lends itself to systematic academic analysis, and also approaches the essence of media literacy, critical thinking (Carl 1995: 51).

4.7.7 TAP (Text, audience and media, production)

Another approach mentioned briefly before, is that of *The Media Literacy Curriculum Model* adapted from a model developed by Eddie Dick of the Scottish Film Council (undated). As soon as one accepts and understands that all communication and mass media content are constructions of reality, this concept will leads to three broad areas within which questions can be raised to help students "deconstruct the media" (see model on the following page):

- **Text** is any media message or product that needs to be examined, be it a television program, a book, a poster, a popular song, the latest fashion, a movie or a popular toy. The type of text can be pinpointed [e.g. cartoon, rock video, fairy tale, police drama] as well as how it differs from other genres and types of text. Denotative meaning can be ascribed and discussed in terms of the narrative structure, core values and other connections. A basic discussion about audiences is also needed, because texts are usually designed for specific audiences, which will sell the program to advertisers.
- **Audience and media:** Modern communication theory – and contemporary mass media research – teaches that audiences negotiate meaning (see 3.2.3 and 3.2.4). Each member of an audience, according to his or her age, gender, race, culture, education and income level, will ascribe his or her own meaning irrespective of critics, teachers and authors. According to this approach, the teacher should facilitate a process where students can develop skills, which will allow them to negotiate a variety of different possible meanings in a text or productions, and which will involve conscious choices. People and children, who can choose and discuss and negotiate meaning, are empowered media users.
- **Production** refers to everything that goes into the making of a media text – technology, ownership, economics, implicated institutions, legal aspects, the use of codes and practices, roles in the process. What is the relationship between story content and commercial priorities? How are values related to ownership and control of the media by giant corporations? How does technology determine what we will see? How does the cost determine who can make media productions? Involving students in their own productions often facilitate comprehension of these issues.

Fig. 4.2: Media literacy curriculum model as devised by Dick, Scottish Film Council [online].



This is often applied as a general model for media literacy and critical thinking, according to Shepherd (2001) that also describes is as "the perfect curriculum". Shepherd (from The Media Awareness Network) acknowledges that they have adapted and modified this model of Dick with great success, and says that it is easy to memorize and apply. While it is simple, it is also sophisticated enough for detailed analysis and interrelatedness of components, being "a great model for literacy and critical thinking". This model is easy to remember and easy to apply. It can be easily memorized (T.A.P. = text, audience and production) by many learners, but is still sophisticated enough to deal with details and interrelationships of complex elements while being flexible enough to deal with any media text. One possible point of criticism may be that the learner is acquired to be already acquainted with specific mass media and media literacy terminology, such as the mass audience. It can therefore possibly be applied best to advanced classes in media literacy.

4.7.8 The three Rs (review, reflect, react)

As far as could be established, this method originates with Sue Lockwood Summers. She maintains that effective teachers already teach critical thinking within their curricula, encouraging students to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the items presented to them. Whether any of these higher level-thinking skills are then applied to messages received outside the classroom walls is questionable. Media literacy instruction focuses on just that: helping learners apply critical thinking about the everyday messages conveyed in advertising, movies, television programs, music, radio talk shows, newspapers, magazines, posters, clothing, and the Internet.

The 3 Rs – *review, reflect,* and *react* – can be applied to any message from any medium.

> *To review:* to examine, investigate, summarize, restate, identify, list, describe, explain, analyze, deconstruct, and study.
>
> *To reflect:* to compare, contrast, personalize, apply, judge, opine, debate, critique, defend, and evaluate.
>
> *To react:* to support, subscribe to, reject, internalize, participate in, copy, adopt, editorialize, and oppose.

Learners first need to ***review*** the actual content of that message. After viewing a television comedy program or soap or specific film or any genre of media, the learners need to be assisted to think about the story, its message, the characters, the setting and the dialog. Some appropriate questions which can be asked are :

How realistic was it?
Was there a moral?
Was some of the language offensive?
Was it realistic?
Was it entertaining?
How timely was the message?

Consequently, learners need to ***reflect*** on both the content and the format of the message. Writing in a journal can encourage this aspect of critical thinking. Students should be encouraged to take time to consider what the message was and why they felt

and reacted to it the way they did. Personal beliefs, ideas, and opinions come into play when receivers evaluate any incoming message. After reading a simple magazine advertisement, learners should consider the following issues :

Do I agree or disagree with the advertisement's statements?
What, if any, difference will it make in my life?
How do I feel about the content and the format?
Who was the intended audience? Was it directed at me?
Did the people in the advertisement represent my family, my friends, or me?
Did it encourage or offend me?
Who sponsored this message and why?
Is this information reliable?
Does it present a biased viewpoint?

Learners lastly need to ***react*** to the message. They can be challenged by the media literacy teacher to take a stand or decide on an action to take in response to it. After watching a news-broadcast, they may find that their opinions on a social issue has changed by causing someone to vote for a particular political candidate or against a new ordinance. Reaction to a message might merely reaffirm an existing idea or opinion. After reading an editorial a person may feel more convinced than ever about your opposition to a new shopping mall in your area. Potential issues to be addressed can include:

What can I do to oppose this project?
Should I buy that product?
Is this something I would like to know more about?
What can I do to support this issue?

Bloom's taxonomy for higher level thinking (2000) can be briefly described in terms of knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis and synthesis. Neil Postman who wrote the authoritative book on TV, "Amusing ourselves to Death"(1985), said in this regard that:

> The TV commercial is not at all about the character of products to be consumed. It is about the character of the consumers of products. Images of movie stars and famous athletes, of serene lakes and macho fishing trips, of elegant dinners and romantic interludes, of happy families packing their station wagons for a picnic in the country -- these tell nothing about the products being sold. But they tell everything about the fears, fancies, and dreams of

those who might buy them.

Based on Postman's statement, media literacy educators should continue to reflect about the "character of the consumers." What are we, as consumers, looking for in a fast-food restaurant experience? What stereotypes are depicted in the commercial? What materialistic messages are sent? If this advertisement is not just about fast food, what else is it about? What generalizations could be made about the culture it depicts?

Pursuing the above argument, Marshall McLuhan already stated in 1964: "The historians and archeologists will one day discover that the ads of our times are the richest and most faithful daily reflections that any society ever made of its entire range of activities." Through the study of television commercials, much can be learned about what we value. Reflecting on commercials gives insight into more than just advertising techniques and the newest products. It is a truly a sociologist's dream: focusing on the bits and pieces of our cultural quilt. Commercials supply ample opportunities to reflect on what is important in society.

Once again this approach summarizes a specific way of teaching. The skills, which are taught, are focused on critical thinking and analysis as well as the development of an own independent opinion. The focus areas are well delineated in terms of what texts can be focused on, what issues to discuss with reference to the audience and the medium, and lastly the feelings the receiver is left with, which is a crucial step in media literacy. Learners need to trust their instincts with reference to many messages and be prepared to defend those perceptions. This approach has great empowerment value, while the specific questions can guide even a non-experienced educator. The bonus-benefit is the emphasis on consumer and buyer empowerment.

4.8 Specific key-driven issues in media literacy e.g. violence and stereotyping

Two approaches or teaching methods will be discussed here, namely the case studies approach and the framework of prominent UK media literacy teacher, Cary Bazalgette.

4.8.1 Case studies approach

Singular brief case studies to underscore this issue will be offered :

- Most of our parents' have taught us to respect the sanctity of marriage – but almost every film and TV-story, particularly the soaps, convey the message that extramarital affairs are fine and that everybody gets tired of being married with very good reason!
- Most of us proclaim that we are religious people, very often Christians, but the use of swearing words and profanities are standard practices even in primary schools amongst childrens.
- Most of the average citizens in any society will without hesitation admit that violence coming at them in all forms such as movies, television-dramas and documentaries, even during news broadcasts, in newspapers by means of vivid reports and photographs, and even children's television is unadvisable and possibly unhealthy. However, nobody censors these programmes for visuals of horrific violent scenes. The questions whether the can be implicated in the current crime and violence tidal waves in a time and society where many criminals, high-jacks, cold-blooded murders and petty theft are every-day occurences, would be a potential questions to ask of learners as part of the case study approach.

Most people in South Africa should know by this time that sleeping around is extremely dangerous in view of HIV/Aids-infections. However, the films and soaps and TV-stories and magazines all tell us that this is the preferable way of living, and that a life without sex is not life at all. The teasers of magazines on any shelf in a news agency or bookshop can be examined in a brief period of time to see how often sex is used as a point of selling on the covers of those magazines.

The large range of media products and messages, even in South Africa, makes this approach an attractive one. Another advantage is that learners can choose their own case study from various media, which will possibly be representative of issues that their age-group members are interested in. A perusal of studies published in the Journal of Communication (June 2002, Vol. 52) underscores the popularity of this approach in the following titles: Does television viewing cultivate unrealistic expectations about

marriage? Do children learn how to watch television? The impact of extensive experience with Blue's Clues on preschool children's television viewing behaviour; and *Mood management via the digital jukebox.*

4.8.2 Cary Bazalgette's framework for approaching media texts

(See also 4.8.4.) On the extensive website of the University of Aberdeen's Communications Department in Scotland, well-known communications researcher Daniel Chandler discusses the framework of Bazalgette (1991:18) for approaching media texts. This framework consists of three perspectives or levels: media *languages* (what does the text say, how does it say it and what sort of text is it?); producers *and audiences* (how was the text produced, by whom and why was it produced, for whom was it produced and how did it reach its audiences?), and *representation* (what judgements do you make about for example about the truth, authenticity, accuracy, realism, and effectivity of the texts; what judgements or inferences may other people make; what can it be said to represent?)

This framework is a good example of simple concepts and questions, although the media educator in this case should also possess a basic and fundamental communications and media knowledge. It is however probably easier to work backwards from the questions to the categories of media languages, producers and audiences and representation. These concepts can be applied to any media text, even advertisements, which provides an effective point of departure for newcomers to the media literacy subject. (No graphical or visual model of this framework could be located.) It strongly resembles the critical thinking and values approaches.

4.9 Production and creation of media messages and content: creative approaches (Hart's and Adams' approaches)

As well as being able to "decode" the symbols that dominate their society, students should be able to "encode" them. Just as we must integrate writing with the development of reading skills, we should integrate formal media analysis with media production. Thus, creative or production activities should be an essential component of media studies in the classroom. These creative activities can range from something as

short and simple as sequencing a series of photographs to a project as complex as the production of a rock video. Many students will grasp the analytic material only if they have undergone production experiences.

Practical work can be defined as any activity in which the learner or child or student him- or herself is involved in by means of constructing communication messages destined for the mass media, with the help of images, sounds and texts. The focus must always be on the aspect of learning rather than achieving and competition, and the practical side of it must be combined with theory and analysis in an inter-related and complementary way. Practical work is to construct and produce and create – not only reproduce existent mass media items. In practical work, students and learners must have something original to say. Tyner (2001) specifies the related problem of access to equipment and infrastructure, while the appliances itself may also often be alien to teachers, but still sees "hands-on production" as an exciting format for self-expression and activism.

Hart (1997: 22) also points out that there may be initial problems with assessing learners and their work, as media education and media literacy is not based on the schemata of existing curricula such as English, History or Science. The assessments should be based on the outcomes and not intellectual content that learners have digested. "Media studies needs to be a discipline which concentrates on a belief by teachers that the cognitive, the intellectual skills of students ... Can grow, can be used and aren't preset ... That students already have experience and will continue to have experience with or without the subject" (Hart 1991: 22). Cultural critic Stuart Hall (in Grahame 1991: 149) argues that it is vitally important to get people into producing their own images, because they "can then contrast the images they produce of themselves against the dominant images which the media offer, and so they know that social communication is a matter of conflict between alternative readings of society", and this is confirmed by Santana (2000) because students "become quick believers of media literacy" when the theoretical and practical aspects are combined.

Adams et al (1990: 54 – 57) suggest the following steps for media, and more specifically, television education according to a cooperative learning plan, which roughly can consist of they following phases, components and activities :

help students critically view what they watch;
compare print and video messages;
spice up a presentation or discussion with short video segments;
analyze the individual daily usage of the mass media;
examine advertising messages;
act out and produce your own advertisement for a worthy product;
create a scrapbook of media clippings;
create new images from the old;
use debate as a stepping stone for critical thought;
evaluate certain television programs with regard to quality and content;
guided imagery;
write letters to newspapers and television stations/producers;
listening in pictures : mapping; and
questions for critical viewing.

The same authors also suggest some usable and elementary ideas for student video productions (Adams et al 1990: 66 – 72):

create original music videos;
design a poetry video;
view and produce scenes from different perspectives;
create a short video segment based on existing movie or television-advertisement segments cutting the dialogue or music;
jigsaw editing;
practice video techniques such as flashbacks, cuts and dissolves;
photography guessing game;
shooting a single scene;
use a video camera for storytelling;
video time line e.g. life of the group;
two minute bites on a community event;
disseminating your own production.

As mentioned in Chapter 2.2 when explaining the concept of media literacy, the delineation and formulation of the phenomenon as such is of vital importance to teachers and educators in particular. They need to know the context if they have to get involved in the teaching of the mass media. The problems that teachers have encountered and will still encounter with some fundamental training in the mass media

as a societal and cultural phenomenon, being extensions of all people, will not only refer to the conceptual or curricular natures. The practical class-problems will also surface — how to manage the classes, how far to go with reference to production and analysis and the application of resources rather than original work. Although practical work can include anything, which happens in the classroom, some people wrongly think of it as to do with technology – of which they perceive themselves to be incompetent with. The above guidelines will most certainly provide many educators with ideas for practical assignments and exercises in classes. The every-day newspaper is also a valuable source of ideas for practical work or even discourses in class.

4.10 Cultural studies and popular culture content

The broader framework of media literacy teaching from a perspective of popular culture content and creation comes under the focus in this section, with specific attention to Duncan's media literacy "menu" with specific steps, and the principle of school discourses and class discussions as a means of media literacy teaching.

4.10.1 Teaching and learning about popular culture (see also 2.5.7)

This pedagogical method need to be seen as fundamentally dialectical and dialogical processes, according to Buckingham and Sefton-Green (1994: 163 - 164):

> ... Involve a constant movement back and forth between action and reflection, between practice and theory, between language use and language study. It is in this process of interaction and translation between different experiences and modes of language – talk, simulation, practical work, writing – that the most significant learning occurs. In a sense, our aim in teaching about popular culture is not primarily to provide students with new knowledge, although of course, this is bound to play an essential part in some areas ... It is more to encourage students to make explicit, to reformulate and to question the knowledge which they already possess. In this respect, reflection and self-evaluation are crucial aspects of the learning process. Above all, however, this should be seen as an inherently social process, as something which takes place within, and it motivated by, a particular set of social relationships – not merely between the teacher and the individual student but also within, and beyond, the wider community of the classroom and the school.

Tyner reminds academics that "[m]edia literacy does not happen naturally. It takes a systematic and formal approach to come up with a media education program that links with critical thinking about media. Some authorities distinguish between the critical

analysis side and the production-oriented side on the other hand" (Tyner 2001). This strongly relates to an incremental process which occurs at all phases and ages of life, and can develop on a continuum because of the multi-faceted and –dimensional nature of media literacy.

4.10.2 Association for Media Literacy: Barry Duncan's media literacy menu

Duncan, one of the leading media literacy educators in Canada and spearheading the Association for Media Literacy, published an article on a "media literacy menu", which he believes form the ingredients for successful media studies education (2001). He emphasizes that these are merely designed to "serve as probes and provocations to uncover the essence of some important ideas about media education and media studies. Specifically, it is reflecting the media literacy education classroom. What is firstly important in this article, is that Duncan underlines the necessity for teachers to experiment and find a variety of ways to exploit so-called teachable media moments (Step 1). This means that a teacher should be alert for any mention of popular media content by the learners, and to apply that to stimulate class discussions and dialogue. Duncan insists, in accordance with Eddie Dick (who designed the TAP-model, see 4.8.7), that both critical practice as well as practical criticism are necessary. This can be accomplished by means of media message production and practical work, and while good equipment is desirable, it is not vital (Step 2). Storyboards and sequencing pictures can be created with very little material (see 4.10).

(Step 3) The following concepts of media should be applied when deconstructing media texts. While codes, conventions and aesthetic media literacy are well known, the following aspects are often neglected: audiences, institutions, the media industries or agencies, technologies or tools, ownership and control, media categories (forms and genres), media representations and relationships, and lastly media vocabulary or media languages. These aspects are equally emphasized by Julian Bowker, author of *Secondary Media Education: A curriculum statement* (AML 1991), as well Chris Worsnop (1999).

Media literacy, according to many other scholars and researchers in this discipline, should be taught in the broader perspectives of cultural studies in order to construct a

suitable critical pedagogy (Step 4, see 2.5.6). This however demands honesty from the educators or teacher about the importance of media pleasure, "guilty or otherwise" (Step 5). In the process much can be learnt from other media professionals to see media and popular culture in action, and Duncan admonishes teachers not to be scared of the secular pleasures of the media (Step 6). Teaching by means of concepts and important themes is advisable (step 7), while the tendency to depoliticize media texts should be avoided (Step 8). This can be accomplished by not only teaching *through and by means of* the media, but definitely *about* the media.

Learners should always be encouraged to explore and construct oppositional readings of the mainstream media (Step 9). Although media literacy education is characterized by serious challenges, complexities and controversies about the teaching thereof, there are no exact and final answers to this "new curriculum" (Shepherd 1999) (Step 10), and any educator can freely explore and experiment with teaching techniques and approaches. Duncan is insistent that students should conduct original research projects when they are doing media projects or assignments (Step 11). The educator however should use appropriate instruments for media assessment, which will supply credibility of media studies by means of systematic approaches and easy-to-follow models for newcomer teachers (Tyner 2000; Worsnop 1999). The appropriateness of content for research should be examined carefully in order that it is not too simple or too advanced (Step 12).

All stakeholders in the media literacy domain, but media literacy educators in particular, are encouraged to explore the "richness of the many meaningful alternatives to mainstream media" (Step 13), but should also address in a comprehensive manner the new and converging communication technologies such as multimedia and the Internet (Step 14). Duncan lastly emphasizes the importance for media teachers to connect with each other, given that "our numbers are small and our educational clout often limited" (Step 15) (2001).

These so-called "steps" automatically grows on any teacher who is willing to become involved with the media. Various of these criteria for teaching develop over time, after several disastrous experiences in classes with learners. It is indeed true that production

and media message creation is of great value, but not vital for development. The mention of Step 1 is crucially important, as learners relate much easier with a teacher/educator who confesses, for example, to attending a rap film such as the current ***8 Mile****, which tells the story of rapper Eminem. An open-minded and honest class atmosphere is of the utmost importance, and hopefully an inflexible and rigid teacher will not be burdened with media literacy education, as no judgmental stances can be allowed in this type of teaching.*

4.10.3 School discourses

Discourses, also called "identity kits" (Gee in Alvermann & Hagood 2000:208) are more than mere utterances of statements. A broader description elucidates discourses in classes as "practices that systematically stand for the objects of which they speak". Discourses produce meaning about appropriate actions and interactions of individuals that inhabit and attend the discourse by regulating and controlling ideas about conduct of the body, mind, emotions, desires and pleasures deemed acceptable within the discourse. Discourses structure our sense of reality and define our identities (Weedon 1997 in Alvermann et al 2000: 209). Deconstructions of discourse are therefore concerned with interrogating the ways in which subjects are constituted within them and how the discursive practices are formed, which provides a glimpse into how discourse is controlled, circulated and changed. This approach to media literacy may however be too advanced to apply to primary and elementary classes.

The stripping of children of their selves, leaving behind their lives outside of school, include popular interests that are viewed as leisure activity and seems irrelevant to academic pursuit. What is conceived of as pleasurable and relevant to students' lives is excluded from the classroom content and becomes unofficial discursive practices. The trend in banishing popular culture from the classroom content tells how the spaces of school discourse organize and partition learners' lives such that their personal interests are apparent in spaces associated with body and pleasure: lunchrooms, playgrounds or unsanctioned acts in classrooms. It is vital that the extremities forged between popular and orthodox texts, out-of-school and in-school literacies, body and mind, media and print, audio and visual, and pleasure and work, are more fully reconciled, valued and

included in critical media literacy instruction, each on its own terms. The discourse about school and schooling assumes that critical media literacy is a natural and necessary component of day-to-day literacy instruction – not a unit to be taught over two weeks (Alvermann & Hagood 2000a: 226).

Hooks (1995 in Alvermann & Hagood 2000b: 226) reported that the inclusion of popular culture and out-of-school pleasures both complicate and strengthen teacher and student relations, resulting in more meaningful instruction and better discussions in classrooms: "Understanding that eros [pleasure] is a force that enhances our overall effort to be self-actualizing, that it can provide an epistemological grounding informing how we know what we know, enables both professors and students to use such energy in a classroom setting in ways that invigorate discussions and excite the critical imagination" (see 3.2.4).

4.11 Comprehensive and academic approaches to advanced media literacy education

The following two teaching approaches are both quite advanced in nature, and should not be applied in classes with beginners in media literacy. It is rather possibly intended for advanced media studies learners, as it combines several elements and aspects of media genres and angles of analysis.

4.11.1 Ideological, autobiographical, nonverbal communication, mythic and production element analysis

Silverblatt, Ferry and Fienan (1999) published a book focusing exclusively on five selected approaches to media literacy (*A handbook: approaches to media literacy).* These approaches that are described as "expansive rather than reductive", provide strategies for media students to make media content accessible and understandable from different perspectives. The authors emphasize that there is no one single truth to media content, and that "the key is to be able to select critical approaches that provide fresh insight into media content ... [where these] critical approaches serve as tools for a systematic analysis of media content" (1999: xi). It is clear that these suggested approaches are not the only available techniques of analysis, and that there are various other perspectives such as narratology, dramatological approaches and keys to

interpreting media literacy. Each chapter details the approach according to steps and techniques, which prove to be too lengthy for full discussion in this thesis.

- The first approach of **ideological analysis** (1999: 3 – 65) clearly springs from a cultural studies angle, and tries to establish what media texts and contents reveal in terms of the social system. It examines issues such as the inequitable distribution of power in cultures on the basis of race, gender and class profiles; the forces of domination and subordination in social systems (hegemony) and the repetitive and dominant ideologies of the media in texts.
- The second approach of **autobiographical analysis** (1999: 66 – 101) argues that it investigates media content as a way to promote personal discovery and growth by offering a reference point of personal experience through which individuals can examine the impact of the media on their attitudes, values, lifestyles and personal decisions. It consequently furnishes insight into media content, including characterization, plot conventions, worldview and messages regarding success and violence. This approach is audience-driven in the sense that the consumer or receiver uses his or her own framework of experience as a point of departure for analysis. It is essentially a technique of process and exploration rather than mere answers to questions.
- The third suggested approach in this book (1999: 102 – 142) operates by means of **nonverbal analysis** of characters. This type of analysis provides insight into the ways in which nonverbal communication behaviour reinforce verbal messages in the media, such as in photographs, film and television — which represents a typical communication unit, which underlines the necessity of basic communication knowledge in this form of teaching. The basis for inclusion of this approach relates to the importance of nonverbal communication as a "surprisingly sophisticated and efficient system for conveying meaning" (1999: 103).
- **Mythic analysis** (Silverblatt et al 1999: 143 – 195) is keeping trend with the growing popularity of narrative and mythic elements in the media as carriers of stories, in a time-slot of culture which emphasizes the rational, scientific explanations with the discount of denial of the value of myth (see 3.2.4). A mythic approach to media literacy education can make media content

accessible by identifying the mythic functions of media programming; by providing perspectives on media content as a retelling of traditional myths and stories; identifying mythic elements in media programs and the meanings behind these elements as a method to approach critical analysis of the narrative, and recognizing cultural myths in media programs that furnish perspective into the specific culture.

- The last detailed approach in this volume (1999: 196 – 249) involves an analysis of **production elements**, in which case production elements refer to the style and aesthetic quality of a media presentation with specific reference to aspects such as editing, composition, point of view, angle, connotation, graphics, color, lighting, shape, movement, scale, sound and special effects. The authors claim that production values are roughly analogous to grammar in the print media, and that these elements influence the audience's way of information reception, the emphasis or interpretation the audience places on the information by the media communicator, and the reaction of the audience to the information. The level of influence or affect is on the affective and/or emotional level which is responsible for mood creation that reinforces manifest messages or themes. An environment is created by the producer (or communicators) that enables the audience to experience rather than merely understand the messages.

While these approaches are very advanced in nature and only suitable for learners who are already familiar with the concepts of media literacy and media analysis, it is well designed for so-called "deep media literacy" (Freed 2003). It is questioned whether learners will be able to construct the specific criteria for every type of analysis, and therefore the book itself will be of great assistance, although a large portion of the content is devoted to mass media theory and analysis. Scaled-down exercises, which include all five approaches or angles, may be given to students to analyze specific media messages or content superficially and not as in-depth as indicated in the book.

4.11.2 Combined approaches of content, culture, audience, myth and nonverbal

This media studies and literacy lecturer in particular, have assembled different approaches in a larger unit to accomplish an advanced degree of media literacy skills

for tertiary educational students at the end of a media literacy course as a final assignment and media literacy outcome product. These approaches have been taken from various sources, but in particular Silverblatt's (1995) conclusive book titled *Media Literacy: Keys to interpreting media messages.* (This book by Silverblatt is considerably easier and more fundamental than his above book in 4.7.1). As part of a large assignment, students may choose any medium and program/content, and apply the following points of analysis to the selected text (see evaluation at the end of this approach's explanation for the motivation to choose the following categories or "points of analysis".)

- **CONTENT**

Process and Function

What is the purpose behind the production?
Does the media communicator want you to act in a particular way as a result of receiving the information?

Comparative media

What are the distinctive characteristics of the medium?
In what ways does the choice of medium affect:
a) the content of the message?
b) the presentation of information?
c) the role/choice/effectiveness of the media communicator?
d) the ways in which the audience receives the information?

Media communicator

Who is responsible for creating the media production?
What are the demographic characteristics of the media communicator(s)?
How do these characteristics affect the content and outlook of the media production?

- **AUDIENCE**

For whom is the media presentation produced?
Is there more than one intended audience?
What values, experiences, and perspectives are shared by the audience?
How do the experiences and perspectives of the individual audience member affect his or her interpretation of the presentation?
How does the choice of audience influence the strategy, style, and content of the media presentation?
Do the strategy, style, and content provide insight into the intended audience(s)?

- **CONTEXT**

Historical context

In what ways has the media presentation been influenced by the events of the day?

a) When was this media production first presented?
b) What prior events led to the climate in which this media presentation was produced?
c) How did people react to the production when it was first presented? Why?
d. How do people react to the production today? How do you account for any differences in reaction?
d) In what ways does an understanding of the historical context provide insight into the media messages contained in the presentation?

What does the media production tell us about the period in which it was produced?

What can be learned about shifts in cultural attitudes and concerns by tracing the evolution of a particular medium, genre, or presentation?

Cultural context

Media and popular culture: in what ways does the media presentation reflect, reinforce, inculcate, or shape cultural attitudes or values? behaviours? preoccupations? myths?

World view: what kind of world is depicted in the media presentation?
What culture or cultures populate this world?
What kinds of people populate this world?

What is the ideology of this culture?
What do we know about the people who populate this world?
Are characters represented in a stereotypical manner?

What does this tell us about the cultural stereotype of this group?
Does this world present an optimistic or pessimistic view of life?
Are the characters in the presentation happy?

Do the characters have a chance to be happy?
Are people in control of their own destinies?

Is there a supernatural presence in this world?

Are the characters under the influence of other people?
What does being a success in this world mean?
How does a person succeed in this world?
What kinds of behaviour are rewarded in this world?

What is the hierarchy of values that appear in this world?
What embedded values can be found in the production?
What values are embodied in the characters?

What values prevail through the resolution?

- **STRUCTURE**

What are the ownership patterns within the media industry? How do these ownership patterns affect media content?
What are the ownership patterns within the media industry?
What are the ownership patterns within the particular media system that you are examining (for example, television, film, or radio)?
Who owns the production company that produced the presentation that you are examining (for example, television, film, or radio)?
How is the media industry regulated? How does government regulation affect media messages?
What is the internal structure of the media organisation responsible for producing the media presentation? How does this internal structure influence content?
What are the resources of the production company?
What is the organisational framework of the production company?
What is the process of decision making in the production company?

- **FRAMEWORK**

Introduction

What does the title of the presentation signify?
What events constitute the introduction of the media presentation?
Does the introduction foreshadow events and themes in the body of the production?

- **PLOT**

Explicit content

What are the significant events in the story?
What is the primary story or plot?
What are the subplots, if any?

Affective response

How does the media communicator want you to feel at particular points in the plot?
Why does the media communicator want you to feel this way?
Is the media communicator successful in eliciting this intended emotional response?
Do your affective responses provide insight into media messages? Explain.
Do your affective responses provide insight into your personal belief system? Explain.

Implicit content

What is the relationship between the significant events in the story?
What are the characters' motivations for their actions?
Are the consequences of specific behaviours defined?

Character development

Have the major characters changed as a result of the events in the story.
How? Why?
What have the characters learned as a result of their experience?

- **GENRE**

Does this presentation belong to any recognisable genre?
Is there a predictable formula for the genre?
Formulaic structure
Conventions
    Storyline
    Setting
    Trappings
What does this genre suggest about: cultural attitudes and values?
Cultural preoccupations? Cultural myths? World view?

- **LOGICAL CONCLUSION**

Does the conclusion of the presentation follow logically from the established premise, characters, and world view?
If not, how should the presentation have ended, given the established premise, characters, and worldview?
How would you have preferred the story to end? Why?
What are the most important manifest messages in the programme?
What are the most important latent messages that you were able to identify?

The reason for selecting and combining the above categories of analysis, is mainly that tertiary learners who passed fundamental communication and media courses are already familiar with the above terminology, and even a non-media studies learner will at least understand what words such as content, plot and context refers to. Although this approach or media analysis technique may seem extremely complicated and time-consuming at first glance, this author has found that it works particularly well when learners watch a specific video [film] together during a practical class, and talk to one another during set intervals to in order answer the above issues. It becomes clearer during this exercise why media literacy education are often also incorporated under the heading of cultural studies and cultural literacy, as it also directly involves an examination of traditions, habits, values and beliefs. It also probably works best when the media text to be analyzed is longer [such as a film] and when the analysis can be spread over three practical consecutive sessions, supplying learners with time to assimilate the questions and their reactions thereto. It is a good technique for more advanced media literacy learners who are already acquainted with mass media and

media literacy terminology, but new learners can also be stimulated for example to construct a "logical conclusion" on a media product, such as a magazine advertisement.

4.12 Choosing a primary pedagogy for media literacy teaching

In each of the approaches or teaching techniques discussed in the previous sections, there is — whether by design of unwittingly — an underlying or fundamental pedagogy pedagogy present. In inquiry into literature on teaching and pedagogy — the latter being "the socially-constructed practices that occur within classrooms and related sites between teachers and students and which have, as their central focus, processes for the production and exchange of knowledge" (Nayler 2002) — underlying media literacy education, it becomes clear that there are many debates and philosophies about which teaching approach to apply.

It seems as if no single pedagogy for media literacy teaching is propagated in academic literature, while a rather eclectic approach is indeed supported by various educators (Center for Media Literacy 2002). This "necessity" can be ascribed to the constantly changing content of the media and popular culture, along with many new and evolving forms and technologies, asking for a "movable text" made up by the teacher, the class or both together — the collaborative strength being teamwork. The underlying pedagogy will always be one of critical thinking and inquiry. For this purpose, various educators' and scholars' taxonomies or theories are available, i.e. Bloom (1976), Center for Critical Thinking (1996), Olver and Utermohlen (1996), DeBono (1976, 1999), Tripp (1990, 1991), Johnston (2002, with his constructivist pedagogical approach), and SOLO by Biggs (1982 and 1999).

Tripp (1990) says that "social-critical research in education is informed by principles of social justice, both in terms of its own ways of working and in terms of its outcomes in and orientation to the community ... involving strategic pedagogic action on the part of teachers, aimed at emancipation from overt and covert forms of domination ... challenging the practices of the system, but of seeking to understand what makes the system be the way it is, and challenging that, whilst remaining conscious that one's own sense of justice and equality are themselves open to question" (1990: 162). From this

statement the suitability of critical thinking pedagogy — meaning deduced from the principles of critical theory, devised by exponents such as Giroux and Apple (in Tripp 1990) to media literacy teaching instantly becomes clear.

On another online library catalog with resources for "fallacies, critical thinking, structured reasoning, propaganda, media literacy, and coercive persuasion" (2003), the following pedagogies are suggested amongst others: teaching debunking, scepticism, argumentation, spotting brainwashing, manipulation and fallacies. This naturally implies that the teacher will need to step back and give agency (as mentioned above) to the learners. Curtin and Nayler (2002) claim that, for media literacy teaching, "pedagogies are needed which support active student engagement in researching their own lives, and which involve them as critical consumers and producers of media are underpinned by critical pedagogies".

Curtin and Nayler (2002) consequently mention developers such as Freire (1993), Morgan (1997), Smyth (Productive Pedagogies 1994), Kemmis, Cole and Suggett (1983), Nickerson (1987) and Tripp (1999). It is, however, necessary to point out that various media literacy educators have applied critical inquiry pedagogies, in which the learner receive more empowerment than before, to the learning area of media literacy. Examples of these are Buckingham (participating in the Grunwald Declaration of UNESCO 1982); Hart (and his Ladder of Participation 1992); Silverblatt (*Keys to Interpreting Media Messages* 1995 and *Approaches to Media Literacy* 1999); Ramsden (1992: 16), emphasizing the aspect of understanding). In this regard, Buckingham, Harvey and Sefton-Green (1999: 7) stress that the value of media education "depends to a large extent on the pedagogic relationships that are established around it — how far young people can control the process, and how far they can enter into a dialogue with their peers and teachers". The essence is to abandon a teacher-centered pedagogy, and make a paradigm shift to learner and critical-thinking centered learning. The added benefit is that this pedagogy of critical thinking or critical inquiry is not new or unfamiliar, as Nayler (2002) indeed quotes Murdoch (1998: 4) who says that "inquiry as a framework for developing understandings about the world has a long history in educational pedagogy and remain a powerful tool in the contemporary classroom" (cf. also Kemmis, Cole & Suggett 1983). The basic nature underlying the pedagogy of

critical inquiry, consists of the recursive nature of inquiry as opposed to linear thinking processes, the students' agency in the active construction of meaning, the students' agency in the process of negotiation of meaning and content, the students' role in terms of the framing of questions, also contributing to empowerment and agency, and the students' agency in terms of taking action on various levels (i.e. to inform others, to stimulate others, to direct change and to operate change.)

What remains of primary importance, is that the learner is taught by any means possible to become a critical thinker about the media as institution and the messages conveyed by them, by means of recognized practices and pedagogies which stimulate independent thinking and critical inquiry, such as SOLO [Structure of observed learning outcomes] (Biggs 1999: 36; Biggs & Collis 1982). The outcome of media literacy, which can always evolve as a learning process, should be the main focus.

4.13 General guidelines and hints for non-educators to foster media literacy at grass-roots level

In addition to the above approaches and teaching techniques from educators, academic scholars and researchers, there are also uncomplicated and easy, general directions or "guidelines" for teachers, students, parents, churches and youth leaders by means of which the effects of the media can be "tamed" as one website, *Taming the Tube* (2002) believes. The majority of these guidelines, hints and instructions communicate in simple and easy language with stakeholders — such as parents, church leaders, youth leaders, children and uninitiated teachers in the media literacy arena. A few of these organizations' and individuals' formulas for media literacy will be briefly highlighted, namely:

- Dr. Dave Walsh, a minister, who has an extended website called MediaWise, advises parents about the seven building blocks for school success in an attempt to foster media literacy;
- Tyner's ten media literacy strategies;
- six ways to reduce advertising from the Center of Media Literacy;
- MediaQuotient, the magazine and product of the national Institute on Media and Family;
- Adbuster's plan for advertisement analysis, together with advice for

grandparents and parents; and

- the formulas of Hynds and Davis for analyzing the news.

4.13.1 Dr. Dave Walsh's (MediaWise) seven building blocks for parents

Walsh (mediafamily.org 2002) argues that the media are primarily to blame for insufficient school performance and academic success, which despite the schools' best intentions, should start at home with a healthy media diet. Walsh maintains that the following *Seven Building Blocks for Schools Success*, as applied to media consumption, can change the learning curve of young learners in schools, and urge parents to take note of these research findings. Dr. Walsh believes that if parents can comprehend the following so-called building blocks, they will logically become mindful of the media.

- If a child spends an average of 25 hours in front of an electronic screen (screen-time), their *natural sense of curiosity* is confined to living-rooms and an "indiscriminate baby-sitter".
- *Imagination* is one of the most powerful learning tools, and overexposure to television and other electronic media restricts a child's imagination as they are not really able to participate. Reading is a good substitute to stimulate imagination.
- *Ability to focus attention*. Many media require a limited amount of attention from the viewer. Reading, art, science and projects as well as outings can foster the ability to focus attention, which can replace excessive exposure to the mass media.
- *Persistence* is necessary to complete the majority of school assignments. The media mostly provide instant gratification, and therefore a media diet is necessary to avoid affecting a child's ability to persevere with certain activities.
- The abundance of fast-paced media teach children to always expect constant sensory stimulation, while their attention wanders when they to not get it, which severely influences the child's ability to *maintain specific attention levels*.
- The *ability to use spoken and written communication* well is essential to

school success. Much media content such as that of video games, movies and various television programmes are not language-based and condusive to language development. Once again, a healthy media diet may assist in language development.

- *Inner speech* is seen by *Mediawise* and Dr Walsh as the ability to reflect and having a private conversation with ourselves. Media content is rarely interactive and does not engage in critical thinking. Critical thinking is at the foundation of a healthy human beings and democracies.

While these building blocks are not in itself media literacy knowledge components and skills, it represents well-motivated reasons for the need of media literacy, particularly to illustrate the effect of the media. It however approaches the media from an angle of censorship and partial abolishment, which is not the main purpose of media literacy outcomes and education.

4.13.2 Kathleen Tyner's ten media literacy strategies

Another media literacy scholar and advocate with many publications to her name, Tyner, formulated ten media literacy strategies on the website of the *Strategies for Media Literacy* organization (2000). She agrees that censorship is a loaded word, while it is also an appropriate act for parents and teachers of young children. Her main focus is the values of the family as opposed to that of the media. Her suggestions, while simply formulated, may be unfamiliar to the average parent and young person, as it already contains specific media literacy terms. The guidelines are brief and to the point: emphasize the media programming, not the medium; respect your child's culture; deconstruct the media and its content as well as the nature and aims of programming; question all media and media content; recognize media stereotypes and request media literacy programs in school. (According to Tyner, "[m]edia literacy is mandated in the school curriculum of most developed countries in the world, except in the United States" (2000). Furthermore a creative, hands-on approach to media literacy should be taken by encourage children to create their own videos, books, newspapers, magazines, comic books and posters, and a media literacy study group consisting of parents are becoming increasingly popular in the contexts of churches, community centers and Parent-Teacher-Associations to learn from on another. The last reminder from Tyner:

be patient as a parent. It is slow work with rewards, as it teaches children to think critically about all communication and information.

4.13.3 Center for Media Literacy's six ways to reduce advertising

The acclaimed and authoritative *Center for Media Literacy*, on one of their linked webpages, supplies "Six ways to reduce advertising in your life". On this web-page, consumers are encouraged not be a walking advertisement for branded clothing and accessories, to keep their counters clear of excessive brand names, to take roads not lined by billboards, to reduce or even eliminate junk mail, to take brand names off prominent possessions and to keep branded items hidden. This advice however seems somewhat radical, and may indeed focus attention rather than divert it on the media and advertisements.

The same *Center for Media Literacy* (1990) also supplies eight guidelines for reading between the lines or "how to analyze a news story" by means of simple questions, such as a comparison of headlines and story content, or an instruction to be suspicious of polls and statistics which can be deceptive.

4.13.4 *MediaQuotient*: The National Institute on Media and the Family

MediaQuotient, an Inventory which can be purchased for approximately R240 ($30) from the Institute, is a measurement tool designed especially for parents and/or guardians to evaluate media use in the household, pointing out positive media habits and indicating where there are opportunities for improvement. The *Individualized Media Profile* is a seven-page report that cites important research findings related to people's responses. A sample profile is available on the Net.

4.13.5 Adbusters' plans for advertisement analysis

This organization's campaigns are typical examples of activist action. In addition to the guidelines of advertisement analysis, they also have plans called "creative resistance", whereby "artists, writers and freedom fighters" are invited to "grab your crayons, pixels and pens and create your best anti-ad art for Memefest 2003. Writers give their best

response to Tom Frank's Conquest of Cool; artists respond to the First Things First Manifesto". Adbusters also organize the annual *TV Turn-off Week* and *Buy Nothing Day* on international level. One cannot help but speculate if such an activistic and prohibitive perspective rather challenges young people to explore that, which is forbidden? Articles such as guidelines for parental guidance when children watch television, can be found in the very attractive magazine, *Adbusters*.

4.13.6 Hynds's and Davis's formulas for reading between the lines in the news

One of the *Center for Media Literacy's* official magazine, *Media and Values (*Issue 50 1990) proposed several formulas for general media consumers to ask specific critical questions when viewing the news. This can be however applied to any documentary or magazine programme with equal success. This approach may be particularly appropriate with state-subsidized media content

Hynds suggests the following steps:

1. who are the sources and what are their perspectives? How many are unnamed?
2. are significant questions left unasked or unanswered. Is the political, social, economic or historical context missing?
3. do quotes seem abridged or out of context?
4. does coverage seem to offer a partial or selective history of events?
5. are exaggerated or theoretical claims reported uncritically without journalistic scrutiny? Are there many loaded adjectives, such as democracy?
6. what stories or events are NOT covered? Are their alternative viewpoints available?

Jay Davis, in the same issue of the publication, advises the following 8 guidelines for media consumers when watching the news or documentaries:

1. Compare headlines and story content
2. Identify politically-charged labels, adjectives and verbs.
3. Question the hidden agendas of suspicious sources.
4. Consider the placement of ideas and sources and its effect on story impact.

5. Look for non-white, non-male perspectives to avoid stereotyping.
6. Compare photographs and photo captions to the text.
7. Are graphic material faithful to the text?
8. Compare news stories to common sense.
9. Be suspicious of polls and statistics.

This framework of questions is simple enough to involve any newsreader or viewer into an elementary exercise of media literacy. While the answers are not of the greatest importance, the fact that the media consumer will need to think seriously about these is most valuable. It is my experience that media consumers are not ignorant, and that they have an instinctive and innate intuition for lies and incongruencies, while they are mostly either too uninvolved to really follow up these suspicions. It proves to be an excellent point of departure for media literacy in the news department.

4.14. Multi-disciplinary subject incorporation

Although this multi-disciplinary "approach" is not one that can or should be applied by the specialist media literacy educator, it is still noteworthy to study potential angles from where the mass media and media literacy can be approached. The biggest benefits and advantages about the incorporation of media studies in school curricula was captured very quaintly by Chris Worsnop (1994) in the following quotation, when he was asked to motivate why the mass media should be studied in school. In addition, he merged the *why* with the *how* in the following passage :

> Like history, because the media interpret the past to us to show us what has gone into making us the way we are.
>
> Like geography, because the media define for us our own place in the world.
>
> Like civics, because the media help us to understand the workings of our immediate world, and our individual places in it.
>
> Like civics, because the media help us to understand the workings of our immediate world, and our individual places in it.
>
> Like literature, because the media are major sources of modern culture and entertainment.
>
> Like business, because the media are major industries and are inextricably involved in commerce.
>
> Like language, because the media help define how we communicate with each

other.

Like science and technology, because the media help us to learn technology by adopting the leading edge of modern technological innovations.

Like family studies, because the media determine much of our cultural diet and weave part of the fabric of our lives.

Like environmental studies, because the media are as big art of our everyday environment as are trees, mountains, rivers, cities and oceans.

Like philosophy, because the media interpret our world, its values and ideas to us.

Like psychology, because the media helps us [mis]understand ourselves and others.

Like science, because the media explain to us how things work.

Like industrial arts and arts, because through the media we experience all the arts as no other age has ever done.

Like politics, because the media bring us political and ideological messages all the time.

Like rhetoric, because the media use special codes and conventions of their own languages that we need to understand.

Like drama, because the media help us to understand life by presenting it as larger-than-life, and compel us to think in terms of the audience.

Like Everest, because they are there.

Because the media go to great lengths to study you and us.

While quite popular in nature, this statement is so well worded that it necessitates a new look at the media in terms of learning. This also supplies eloquent proof why a vision to involve ALL university/tertiary students in a basic media literacy course is so important. These metaphors explain why the media form such an interwoven part of the fabric of people's every-day lives. It also emphasizes how vital it is to understand the social, economic and political frameworks in which individuals function as part of societies. It lastly demonstrates the value of the often under-acknowledged human and social sciences and education disciplines. This statement can be applied when learners are resistant towards the idea of media literacy education.

In a study executed by Kubey and Baker (1999) to establish where media literacy and education elements appeared in state education frameworks, they found the following frequencies of media literacy appearances:

English, language and communication arts – 46 states;

Social studies, history and civics – 30 states;

Health, nutrition and consumerism – 30 states; and

Pure media strands such a media literacy – 7 states.

The descriptions for the following frameworks in which media literacy is absorbed, read as follows:

- **LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION AND ARTS :**

  "It is an important goal of education for learners to be able to critique and use the dominant media of today. Visual literacy is essential for survival as consumers and citizens in our technologically intensive world. Learners will appreciate various visual forms and compositions, compare and contrast visual and print information, formulate and clarify personal response to visual messages, evaluate the form and content of various visual communications, identify and interpret main ideas and relevant details in visual representations, apply insights and strategies to become more aware and active viewers in their leisure time, relate what is seen to past experience, convey and interpret ideas through non-print media, recognize the persuasive power of visual representations" (California History/Social Sciences framework for Grades 9 – 12, 2001).

- **SOCIAL STUDIES**

  "Students evaluate, take and defend positions on the influence of the media on American political life, in terms of :

  The meaning and importance of a free and responsible press ;

  The role of electronic, broadcast, print media and the Internet as means of communication in American politics ;

  How public officials use the media to communicate with the citizenry and to shape public opinion" (California history/social sciences framework for Grades 9 – 12, 2001).

- **HEALTH AND CONSUMER SKILLS**

  Students must analyze media influence on tobacco and alcohol [use] and develop counter-advertisements for peer education (West Virgina); students must evaluate the idealized body image and elite performance levels portrayed by the media and determine the influence on a young adult's self-concept, goal setting and health decisions in Missouri (Kubey & Baker 1999).

The teaching and using of mass media content is classes is almost a logical consequence of dragging children's immediate worlds of living into the classroom. Every time a poster is displayed, a book read or a film screened in school, every time there is a public controversy about a television programme or half the nation's population watches a certain broadcast such as 11 September 2001 in New York, the opportunity for interaction between teacher and learner are there to become engaged in the process of making sense of cultural phenomena – and to "share" and make meaning from the mass media (Lusted 1991: 5). Whilst media literacy is an attempt to produce informed media consumers, rather than helping a small number of students learn to be media practitioners, media studies should ideally be offered in the high school social science curriculum, to begin the media literacy effort. It should not merely be journalism courses with some emphasis on applied skills and less emphasis on the broader media studies perspective (Tuggle & Wulfemeyer 2000: 67).

The Media Literacy Resource Guide from the Ontario Ministry of Education, possibly the most authoritative manual on Media Literacy in Canada and internationally, takes the following suggestions with regard to the incorporation of media literacy by teachers into classes at school. In relation to media-literacy analysis in a subject context, it is important to stress that teachers will need to move beyond conceiving of media simply as audio-visual aids. Ideas that teachers can use to incorporate media literacy teaching into their specialist classes include:

English – Film-literature comparisons, script writing and multimedia thematic units (i.e. exploring how themes such as the nature of courage, the hero and comedy are expressed in various mediums).

History – Presentation of historical figures, historical bias and point-of-view, the marketing of politicians, and propaganda.

Geography – Comparisons of the images of cities in films and TV to the socio-economic realities of those cities; deconstruction of travel films; bias in films made by governments or corporations; depiction of countries as portrayed by governments vs. "structured absences," images that are not included in the official portrayal.

Family Studies – The representation of the family in advertising and film; sexuality and sexual stereotyping in the media; and the culture of violence.

Science and Technology– In addition to their treatment in science fiction,

there are numerous references to science and technology in newspapers, films, magazines, and novels. Television, in both news and entertainment programs, constantly packages scientific issues and information. The success of David Suzuki's "The Nature of Things" (CBC) demonstrates our keen interest in the achievements and issues of science and technology. Some of this material can be integrated into the science curriculum by pointing out connections between the scientific issues raised by the media and the scientific principles underlying them. Students can also explore the strengths and limitations of the presentation of science topics in the media.

Visual Arts – The possibilities for media literacy in the visual arts are enormous. Many of the decisions made in the media are based on aesthetic considerations. The role of art in a mass-media-dominated society is of major concern for aspiring artists. Art teachers need to assess more than just the principles of pleasing form when looking at media; they need to consider all of the aspects that have been outlined in the section on key concepts in *Visual Arts, Intermediate and Senior Divisions*, Curriculum Guideline (Toronto: Ministry of Education, Ontario, 1986).

Music – Students are immersed in rock music and rock videos. While some music teachers use rock as a resource, many consider it inappropriate for their music courses. However, there are many valuable connections that can be made through the comparison of traditional and popular music. The popular-music enables music teachers to help their students investigate the aesthetics, the value messages, and the commercial implications of this pervasive form.

Physical and Health Education – Representation of gender, sexuality, violence, and televised sports in the media are all avenues that can be explored in the classroom.

Mathematics – Teachers of mathematics will find that a great deal of research in the mass media depends on statistics. Hence, the skills of compilation and graphing will be important. In the area of television, the methods of rating the most watched prime-time programs depend on the exact use of mathematical information.

Resource Centre Teachers – Today's libraries, information and resource

centers contain not only books, but also a good cross-section of popular periodicals, phonograph records, slides, and audio – and videotapes. In the area of print, many periodicals, such as *Time* and *Maclean's*, require not only the traditional reading skills, but also media-literacy decoding skills as well. Resource center teachers can play a valuable role by helping students and teachers to understand the strengths and limitations of each medium when they are selecting resource materials.

The issues, trends, and special events of our time are simultaneously reflected in all or several of the mass media. Hence, whether the topic is the arms race, the promotion of a rock star, an advertising campaign, or sexuality and violence in the media, a cross-media analysis is required. The effective application of the key concepts of media depends on the integration of several media. A discussion of violence in the media, for example, might combine knowledge from history, literature, sociology, psychology, communications theory, and linguistics.

The above discussion has not been evaluated with a view to practical and theoretical media literacy teaching, but an understanding of the many contexts in which the mass media do play a role, can possibly sensitize stake-holders in the process. Many educators who need to meet the challenge of incorporating the mass media in their classes, may be hesitant. The above discussion however highlights the many and various approaches that all eventually contribute to the establishment of media literacy, and the empowerment of media consumers. When these issues are mentioned to learners, a greater receptivity for media literacy in view of the extensive role of the mass media in all education is encountered.

4.15 Conclusion

In the attempt to address the theoretical research question and objective of the study, a variety of approaches to the teaching of media literacy were found and briefly discussed. Although South Africa has more potential obstacles to overcome in the process of media literacy implementation as independent curriculum both on primary, secondary and tertiary educational levels, the First World countries who have made considerable progress with reference to the implementation and integration of media

literacy, have their obstacles to overcome as well. South Africa has the same mass media formats and genres as most other countries, although the incidence of receivers and users may differ radically.

It is impossible to assimilate all of the above approaches and methods of media literacy teaching. What became clear however, is that critical thinking is a matter of priority. What medium is being studied, and what programmes and texts are chosen for analysis and teaching, is not of major importance. What is vital, is that learners develop an inherent and critical relationship with media content. This author experienced a growing enthusiasm and fascination among learners with the mass media and the "cultural and social machines" of society as their knowledge and understanding on many issues develop. What will be of particular importance, is the perspectives and temperament of the educator or assessor. An open-minded attitude is vital to encourage learners to venture their own opinions and suggestions, and to a large extent the success of media literacy will hinge on the enthusiasm and willingness of the educator to explore as many media texts and formats with the learners.

Although the following chapter will propose a model for the teaching of media literacy by means of specific cognitive, affective, psycho-motor and conative facilities, recognition of the many potential and diverse approaches by means of which media literacy can be taught, can be of value. Whether class discourse is the chosen approach, or content analysis techniques applied to specific media texts [e.g. pop music lyrics], the ultimate aim of media literacy is to equip learners with self-confidence to develop their own perspective during interaction with the media. It is not required of the learners to NOT expose themselves to any specific programs or contents. With the development of critical discernment, fortified by class discourses, research or even social conversations about their studies — which media literacy classes seem capable of achieving, and if feedback from learners to this author can be trusted — the eventual outcome will be achieved: to enhance enjoyment of the media's products and messages.

Chapter 5

Proposing an ideal model for media literacy teaching on a tertiary level in South Africa

In this chapter the following aspects will be discussed:

- Media literacy simplified for the South African context
- Content analysis as basis for developing the model
- Grounded Theory applied to the development of the model
- Proposing a model for media literacy teaching on a tertiary level in South Africa
- Practical guidelines for the implementation of the model for media literacy teaching
- Curriculum development for media literacy
- Potential obstacles to the teaching of media literacy in South Africa
- Stakeholders and role-players in the process of media literacy teaching in South Africa
- The ideal media literacy educator

> The concept of media literacy is neither simple nor monolithic. As the momentum for media literacy education grows, these conflicts need to be addressed head-on – and resolved in favor of pedagogies that emphasize critical analysis without simplistic media-bashing ... Politics [about media literacy] often seems stuck in a rhetorical blind alley where, instead of focusing on forward-looking educational policies, advocates and politicians expend their energies on headline-grabbing but ineffective calls for more ratings, filters, and other forms of censoring the young. Media literacy is far better than censorship ... for everyone committed to modern education, intellectual freedom, or the healthy development of youth (Heins & Cho 2002 (Free Expression Policy Project) [Online].

5.1 Introduction

The fourth and final normative research question as posed in the introduction (Chapter 1.3), which also constitutes the goal of the study, refers to the matter of developing an ideal model for the teaching of media literacy on a tertiary level in an attempt to address the stated research problem in South Africa. In the absence of applicable local literature, and therefore also a specific theory and model for media literacy education in South Africa where the subject is only occasionally and peripherally incorporated in various other curricula, the need for a relevant model is evident. The teaching of media literacy in South Africa however, compared to First World countries which have made considerable progress with the conceptualization of media literacy as free-standing curriculum and the implementation in educational systems. This poses unique problems, but could include aspects such as mass media ecology and consumption, demanding that a basic understanding about obstacles, which can hinder the teaching of media literacy, should be taken into consideration.

While it was mentioned in the introduction (see 1.2) that the literature review in this study has uncovered only one explicit model for media literacy teaching (see 4.8.7), Chapter 4 referred to various "frameworks" and "formulas", even if not in graphic (model) format. The fact remains, however, that this specific literature review yielded no model specifically for tertiary education of everyday media consumers and ordinary people. An envisioned content-and-process model for the media literacy teaching in question should ideally have a two-fold purpose:

- to provide the learning opportunity for potential facilitators to become media literate individuals; and

- as a result, to become empowered as media literacy facilitators, educators or "teachers" in other contexts, from where the next group of receivers can again further the diffusion process of media literacy.

It should be remembered that there is not such thing as perfect or complete media literacy. It always grows on a continuum, and very often by means of word of mouth and conversations about the content and process of media literacy itself. From a tertiary perspective, it is envisioned that ALL students should undergo media literacy training as a compulsory course — especially those in the human, social and educational sciences, since they are more likely to find themselves employed in interactive contexts in which the diffusion of media literacy could be enhanced.

This chapter will thus strive to address the normative research question and research goal in terms of the presentation of an ideal model for the teaching of media literacy on tertiary level in South Africa, which is not to suggest that this model should be regarded as the alpha and omega of media literacy teaching. The focus is rather on providing a potential point of departure in the absence of explicit South African guidelines for media literacy teaching.

Previous references have been made to the fragmented and ambiguous nature of media literacy internationally. One of the first aims in this chapter would be to clarify these many statements and innuendos in an effort to establish what could be incorporated in a local teaching model for media literacy. The secondary research objectives which have been explored in the previous chapters, and which should rationally contribute to the development of such a model, can be summarized as follows:

- The term media literacy, both as a concept and field of study (conceptual research objective) was explored and described in Chapter 2. Reference to historic origins, developmental phases and contemporary research was included, and media literacy was isolated in terms of other forms of literacy and sub-disciplines of media studies. Lastly it also explored the motivations for media literacy education, as well as the benefits and aims of the process.

- The state of affairs regarding media literacy as a teaching phenomenon (meta-analytical objective) was explored and described in Chapter 3. This implied an investigation of the originating communication and mass media contexts in which the justification for media literacy originates, the major debates about media content and effects studies, and brief discussions on the state of media literacy both internationally and locally in South Africa. This comprises brief descriptions about leading scholars and organizations (Appendix A).
- The most plausible theories on the teaching of media literacy (theoretical research objective) was explored and described in Chapter 4. A matrix, based on conceptual analysis, and consisting of instructional approaches, frameworks and methods for the teaching of media literacy in the previously mentioned First World countries was constructed. Each of these approaches, frameworks and formulas was briefly discussed and evaluated. This exploration and description indicated that no fundamental approaches to the teaching of the complex phenomenon of media literacy could be found, and strengthened the need for a **basic, simple yet comprehensive model for media literacy teaching** in order to explain both the content and process. Such a model could also simplify the alleged ambiguous and fragmented field of media literacy studies.

However, as is the case with the majority of questions and problems in the realm of the social sciences, addressing an issue by means of theoretical answers and solutions are less complicated and more simple than detailing and executing the practical steps to the envisioned end result. The subject of media literacy does not differ in any respect. This researcher can support this sentiment, because a distinct problem during the developmental phase of a B.A. Media Studies degree became manifest with reference to the structuring of related subjects (modules). In view of the many issues, various media and genres, each with different functions in the mass media and mass communication, deciding what can be truly classified as relevant for a course in media literacy, proved to be complex. Issues relating to media literacy, not being part of media studies, cultural studies, mass communication or media education or even popular culture, were clearly dispersed in literature relating to the mass media and its

effects, and literally had to be extracted from these studies and academic writings in order to develop content for an academic discipline in it own right.

The context of the substantial problems in teaching the subject of media literacy is probably one of the primary explanations for the relative obscurity of and ignorance about the subject and field of study in South Africa in particular. In addition, the word "media" is already a collective noun, incorporating numerous formats, types and genres of messages. An orchestrated, categorized and methodical approach to media literacy, in which all the related aspects are holistically integrated, is of the utmost priority.

In this chapter therefore, focusing on a proposed model for teaching media literacy on a tertiary level in South Africa, the following aspects will be addressed:

- the simplification of the media literacy phenomenon as field of study, and developing elementary points of departure for a model for media literacy teaching by means of the steps included in content analysis and Grounded Theory (see 5.2);
- the proposal of a model for media literacy education against a South African background, where the concept of media literacy is either unfamiliar or existing under various other subject names (see 5.3 and 5.4);
- the proposition of specific practical guidelines for the implementation of the model during the teaching of tertiary media literacy (see 5.5);
- brief references to the incorporation and teaching of critical thinking as the cornerstone of media literacy teaching (see 5.6);
- the exploration of the obstacles unique to the South African media and education landscapes that may pose certain problems different to that of First World countries (see 5.7); and
- concise stipulations of the role of other stakeholders and role-players in the process of media literacy dissemination (see 5.8. and 5.9); and the crucial role of the ideal media literacy educator (see 5.10).

5.2 Media literacy simplified for the South African context

While media literacy is an incorporated phenomenon and field of study in developed countries, the concept is far from familiar and established in this country. Media literacy elements were occasionally encountered in "disguised forms" in South African school education (e.g. using newspaper texts for comprehension tests or speech-making). A model such as that of Dick's (T.A.P., see 4.8.7) clearly includes terminology and words with which citizens and media consumers in these developed countries have become acquainted over years of advanced media exposure.

Apart from the lower educational level characteristic of the South African society, the media history in this country is much shorter, specifically in terms of television and new media. This causes a situation where ordinary media consumers are not at all informed about specific media terms and related aspects. Should a model for tertiary education therefore be devised, it has to be *comprehensive while also simple*. Media literacy is a complex phenomenon and process with many origins and implications. In order to understand it, the model has to be basic while also incorporating all the vital components and contents.

It must be kept in mind that media literacy teaching, as approached in this study, does not primarily target communication or media studies students or practitioners, but rather students from other disciplines without a broader framework of reference regarding the dynamics and contents of the mass media and communication in general. It is thus envisaged that these students, for example, as social workers, teachers, ministers of religion etc., could use this model (that formed that basis of their own training in media literacy) in presenting training opportunities to ordinary citizens and media consumers in various social contexts.

While the Canadian leaders may for example emphasize the *production* of media messages as a vital step to media literacy, the acknowledged Japanese leader Suzuki Midori (2000; see Appendix B 3.7.11 for brief biography) on the other hand emphasizes the aspect of "unlearning not to think" — *critical thinking skills in general* — with reference to the mass media and its consumers. Tyner and Lloyd-Kolkin choose to focus on the definition of mass media; production techniques; entertainment;

advertising and information (in Heins & Cho 2002). Considine and Haley published a comprehensive text called *Visual Messages: Integrating Imagery Into Instruction*, which advocates an interdisciplinary approach of integrating media literacy concepts into existing curriculum, and linking them with "broad goals like responsible citizenship, and with emerging trends ... such as cooperative learning, multicultural education, and critical thinking skills" (in Heins & Cho 2002).

While all of these role-players strive to equip learners with specific media literacy learning contents and skills, many of the statements and perspectives about media literacy refer to entirely different dimensions and angles of the very same phenomenon and process. **After a study of media literacy as teaching subject, one rather gets the impression that one is still nowhere, and neither does one know where to commence with the teaching.** It is natural that media literacy will have as many layers as the mass media itself in terms of formats, genres and functions.

While there is a multitude of resources and plans (cf. Chapter 4) to incorporate the media in lecture halls and classrooms, it will still take a resourceful teacher (see 5.7) to quickly generate these ideas in classes which, specifically in a country such as South Africa, can be inhabited by many students from different cultures, languages, gender groupings and levels of development. (These specifications will be addressed in the discussion of the various components and processes of the model in (see 5.2.6.7 and 5.9). The shift from so-called high or classical culture to mass and popular culture might also be a strange experience to assessors initially (cf. popular culture 2.5.7 and 4.11.1), and deserves specific reference to inclusion in the teaching process.

5.3 Content analysis as basis for development of the model

The nature, characteristics and methodology of content analysis were briefly addressed in the first chapter of the thesis in 1.6.2. Singular notes are, however, in order here for the contextualization of the ensuing analysis of media literacy definitions (Appendix A).

Cassell and Symon's (1994: 26) methodological perspective that singular isolated concepts or units — words, phrases or themes — be *indexed and categorized*, has its

roots in the logistic-positivistic methodology and tradition. It is focused on hypothetical testing and generalizations for points of departure, which clearly indicates the relevance to the qualitative methodology of Grounded Theory which is applied in this chapter on the way to the proposal of a model for the teaching of media literacy. Bailey (1982: 40) sees concepts simply as mental images or perceptions, whether abstract or observable in nature, and these concepts may contain several categories, values or sub-concepts. Holsti (1969: 95) reminds that categories should reflect the purposes of the research, be exhaustive, mutually exclusive and independent. The constructs which are placed in various categories should have common elements, and recording units can be either single words, themes, phrases, characters, sentences or even paragraphs (see also 1.8.2).

Robert Weber (1990: 9) described the method and process of content analysis as a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text, which can be about the sender(s) of the message, the message itself, or the audience of the message. The rules of this process of inference will vary with the theoretical and substantive interests of the investigator. From this statement, the suitability to scientifically demarcate the conceptual field of media literacy is clear.

Words or phases can be counted as a means of representation or indication of a specific inclination or affective and cognitive content, which was exactly what was done in this exercise on the 50 different statements about media literacy. Gordon (1975: 41) referred to content analysis as "... a peculiar field of endeavor, because its objective appears to be the derivation of a meta-language of communication: that is, a set of categorical symbols by which one speaks precisely about what is communicated, to the end that these symbols may be quantified, compared and analyzed ... in a manner different from that of traditional literary criticism. It permits one to boil down masses of material to reasonably manageable quanta."

5.3.1 Selection of the sample for content analysis

As explained in Chapter 2.2 (where a working definition for media literacy only based on *cognitive aspects* was established), a directory of 50 acclaimed published and widely-disseminated statements (Appendix A) on the nature and manifestations of

media literacy teaching by some of the most prominent *educators* and *organizations* (as cited in Chapter 3.5) as well as other noticeable *people* and *groups* in the media literacy study field (as explained by Bless & Higson-Smith 2000: 65; Mouton 2001), was assembled without specifically searching for any particular key-words or approaches.

Both content analysis and Grounded Theory techniques were used in the development of the model. A large collection of statements on the nature of media literacy by leading international educators and organizations were analyzed. The results and findings will form a basis for the development of the model by using Grounded Theory principles. These quoted statements were all issued by authoritative and prominent leaders and organizations in the media literacy field of study, whose names repeatedly emerged in the initial literature review and ensuing searches. Many of the current media literacy leaders are indeed involved with tertiary institutions, albeit in various faculties and departments (e.g. education, languages, cultural studies, journalism and communication) and possess formal post-graduate qualifications mostly in education or media studies (Proff. Reneé Hobbs, David Considine, Elizabeth Thoman, Len Masterman, Drr. Art Silverblatt and James Potter). These scholars together definitely ascribe a character of an academic and scientific discipline to media literacy, specifically in terms of educational and pedagogical viewpoints, and give credibility to the statements absorbed in the directory.

What is also noteworthy, is that almost all of these authorities have specific views on media literacy in their personal capacity as academic scholars. Almost all of them are involved with non-profit organizations as well (e.g. Prof Silverblatt and Webster University's Media Literacy Department; Rick Shepherd, past president of the Canadian *Association for Media Literacy* and the *Media Awareness Network*, using Dick's (Scottish Film Council) *Media Literacy Curriculum Model*; Bazalgette from the University of Aberdeen and working with the *Center of Media Literacy*; Prof. Reneé Hobbs from the University of Oregon's College of Education in the USA, organizer of National Media Literacy *Conference in Los Angeles in 1996, and current chairman of the* Media Literacy Online Project; John Pungente; David Buckingham involved with

the University of London and acting for the *Center for Media Literacy*; see also Appendix B for brief biographies).

Lastly, what is remarkable, is that scholars with radically differing viewpoints often work together for several of these influential and authoritative non-profit media literacy organizations. (The many profit-driven organizations in the media literacy environment were not considered for analysis of statements on the nature and dimensions of media literacy, as it is difficult to establish whether the alleged "educational packs" on offer were indeed compiled by academic scholars with knowledge of educational principles. Quite often, books that are used with these educational packs, are rather written by scholars of persuasion and propaganda, for example, and may therefore only represent one dimension of the media literacy concept.) In the selection of statements for the purpose of content analysis, geographical limitations and balance were included. Care was taken to include perspectives from media literacy leaders and organizations in Canada, the USA, the UK, Australia, New Zealand, other countries in Europe as well as Asia.

The mere fact that so many declarations, accounts and viewpoints on the essence of media literacy have been encountered, confirms Masterman's and Hobbs's (2001: see also 2.2) earlier remarks with reference to the ambiguous and fragmented landscape of media literacy teaching. This may explain why the concept won ground quite haltingly, even in First World countries (see also Heins & Cho 2003; see 2.3.2). Repetitive references to debates and disputes between various leaders and "schools" of media literacy were found in the media literacy environment, sometimes in scathing arguments between scholars with differing perspectives regarding the nature of media literacy teaching and how it should be attained (cf. correspondence between Masterman and Bazalgette in the UK 1999; Lewis and Jhally in the USA 1998). Hobbs (Journal of Communication 1998) is actually of the opinion that this "rich diversity of perspectives and approaches to media literacy is both a strength and a weakness", and that the future of the media literacy movement indeed depends on the "ability of this diverse assembly to reach some consensus on the issues raised and to implement a pedagogy of inquiry — to make asking critical questions about what we watch, see and read, stand at the center of what it means to be literate".

{PRIVATE "TYPE=PICT;ALT="}In spite of the stipulations in Chapter 2.2, intensified scrutiny of this young academic field of study — which seems to be driven and supported by a minority of focused and media-literate academics and concerned individuals, often coming from other social environments such as education, the church, health practitioners and pro-children advocates — is vital in order to determine exactly where to start with media literacy education in South Africa, and what to include in the model under development. It would include aspects such as being able to decipher the content and messages of the mass media; it would also include a knowledge of *why, with what* and how these messages are being constructed, and *who* and *what* the mass media really stand for in terms of politics, ownership and ideology. It would additionally refer to an ability to identify the different genres and formats, to view the contents critically and contextualize these contents from a historical as well as cultural media perspective. This model will certainly have to include aspects on both the *content* and *process* of media literacy teaching.

The application of the methodology of Grounded Theory demands in this case that the available definitions in Appendix A are scrutinized in order to isolate key aspects by means of content analysis for the development of a South African learner model for media literacy.

5.3.2 Units for content analysis of media literacy statements: emerging constructs assembled into key-categories

After initial exploration of and probing into the masses of available literature of the international media literacy phenomenon in which very little was found with reference to South Africa, the researcher proceeded in an *inductive manner* and by means of inductive reasoning (Du Plooy 2001; Mouton 2001) in order to describe what was observed. In inductive research or reasoning, ideas or assumptions about specific constructs, concepts, variables and relationships, questions emerge gradually as (i) the creation of this sample of statements on media literacy is conducted (as described in 5.2.2), and (ii) as the content analysis is executed. Mouton (2001: 118) emphasizes the fact that conclusions are generally already latent in assumptions which is being made during the initial exploration and literature review.

In the qualitative perusal of the definitions and perspectives of media literacy, the following broad constructs and concepts which emerged, were organized in specific categories, were selected as vital to the development of the proposed model, according to which emerging constructs could be indexed. It should be emphasized that no comparable systematization to the following categories was found in literature.

- **Knowledge contents** which media literacy aims to cultivate, and should be included in the process of education and learning; thus representing the *cognitive and intellectual learning* contents and dimensions;
- **Affective qualities** advanced in learners during the media literacy process, accounting for a *fundamental comprehension, assimilation and emotional integration of the cognitive and behavioural aspects*;
- **Conative conditions** which seem as a prerequisite for the *willingness* to work on a new and more advanced relationship with the mass media and its content;
- **Skills,** referring to *behavioural capabilities* which media literacy should furnish learners with, and which will characterize the typical media literate person;
- **Techniques** by means of which the above dispositions can be developed in individuals, communities and societies;
- **The focus of media literacy teaching units** i.e. specific issues in the media such as the role and responsibilities of the audience, violence, stereotyping, manipulation of texts and images and genre analysis amongst others;
- The reasons (**"why"**) behind media literacy. Although these matters have been discussed at length in previous chapters, particularly Chapter 2, some of these reasons surfaced again in the content analysis of the various definitions and perspectives of media literacy;
- The **potential consequences and positive outcomes** resulting from media literacy education, which can contribute to the conative mobilization of the individual or groups of people;
- **The learner** who should learn and develop these cognitive, affective and behavioural contents and skills; and lastly the

- **Stakeholders and role-players** who should become involved in the dissemination and process of teaching and learning of media literacy.

5.3.3 Data findings and tabled results of data

The constructs and phrases which were obtained by means of the deconstruction and content analysis of the statements and descriptions of the media literacy phenomenon, appear in Appendix A, and relate to the units of analysis in 5.2.3. These emerging constructs were not eventually quantified (as is the case in traditional quantitative content analysis), since the focus was rather to get a qualitative perspective and grip on the concept and process, and because the research process repeatedly produced specific phrases and terms which became of major importance. From the emerging constructs and categories, *it became quite clear that all the previous chapters' content undoubtedly had to be considered in the development of a model, and actually supplied the necessary raw data and literature to depart from in the process of Grounded Theory (see 5.3).*

5.3.4 Emerging concepts and constructs as points of departure for development of a model

After the relevant data was indexed, an emerging definition or description of media literacy appears to broadly consist of the following categories:

- **knowledge contents;**
- **affective and psycho-motor skills;**
- **conative qualities;**
- **techniques of teaching;**
- **subjects or themes;**
- **focal points;**
- **positive results or even aims of media literacy education; and**
- **people involved either in the process of teaching or learning** (see Appendix C for categories after initial analysis; see also discussion in 5.8).

5.3.5 Interpretation of findings focused on the development of proposed model

The selected categories (construct types and units of analysis) resulting from the research clearly indicate that there are various aspects to consider in the teaching of media literacy, both with reference to content and process. An equal balance between the knowledge components; the affective aspects — how the individual feels about the media and media literacy; the conative preconditions — a definite willingness and preparedness to have one's individual media diets and habits, and one's thinking about the media's role in one's life changed; and the skills to be acquired must be established. It has been verified (see Chapter 3.2.3) that there is a literal symbiotic relationship between people and their media choices and media diets — they prefer specific media, formats and content according to their emotional and affective needs, health and experiences (cf. uses and gratification theories). When specific definitions have to be formulated for these different aspects of media literacy education, **the following specific categories,** based on arrangement and interpretation of the constructs, emerge from the qualitative perusal of the content analysis results of the fifty statements in question. (These can also be described as various dimensions and facets of media literacy, and it is assumed that the proposed model will need to address these dimensions as well).

5.3.5.1 A definition or summarized description pertaining to the **knowledge and cognitive aspects** (as also stated in Chapter 2.2) of media literacy can read as:

> *The education/teaching of cognitive methods to assist the learner to realize/comprehend his/her part (as audience member) in the creation of mass media culture by means of analysis and deconstruction of media messages and by challenging the traditions and functions of commercial media culture, resulting in a healthy skepticism and understanding of the content and impact of the mass media.*

5.3.5.2 **Affective abilities** which should be ideally acquired and internalized as a result of the teaching of media literacy can be broadly defined as:

Acquiring control over media intake and perceptions created by media content resulting in the ability to make empowered distinctions about the values proclaimed by the mass media and a healthy skepticism about and independence from media manipulation, to consequently enhance enjoyment of the media.

5.3.5.3 **Psycho-motor and behavioural capabilities** which may be developed in the process of media literacy education, can be described as:

The ability to negotiate and navigate the media environment by challenging the traditional consumer-driven media culture and reflecting on media exposure and content resulting in the construction of own points of view, consumer competence and conscious and alert media exposure, growing towards the creation and production of quality media messages.

5.3.5.4 Defining the **conative** conditions required for the **willingness** to become media literate could be summarized as:

(The willingness) to become more aware and prepared to actively participate in the process of applying evaluation of and critical thinking to media content resulting in a regulation and balancing of media diet and exposure, and the making of independent decisions about the media.

5.3.5.5 The **WHY** naturally constitutes the motivation and **reasons for the necessity** of the teaching of media literacy, which can supply points of departure for commencing with media literacy as independent subject:

To actively participate in the mass communication process and independently navigate the media environment, rather than being manipulated by negative and damaging media content; thereby becoming able to apply critical thinking to media content, to negotiate meaning and make own decisions, and consequently grow into an empowered citizen with expanded communication and information skills who can increasingly appreciate and enjoy the media, and to establish a healthy democracy of media audiences (see also 2.6.1 to 2.6.2).

5.3.5.6 With reference to the **HOW of the teaching of media literacy**, and the use of approaches and techniques, the following aspects can be highlighted as part of a broad definition:

Fostering critical thinking by means of active participation, challenging traditional perceptions, dialogue with others, continuous questioning, reading, reflecting and reviewing of media messages and the teaching of value comparisons. (See complete Chapter 4 for various approaches and teaching techniques; see also critical thinking in 5.6).

5.3.5.7 **WHO** should ideally become media literate?

All people and citizens: adults, young people and children, parents, students, citizens, media institutions, media workers and media professionals; the literate and illiterate.

5.3.5.8 **Who** is going to **teach** media literacy?

Teachers and educators [on all educational levels], parents, students (who are qualified in media studies), community workers, the media industry and media workers.

5.3.5.9 What will be the **positive consequences and effects** of media literacy education and a media literate society?

Media literacy education will result in the development of a healthier democracy with critical-thinking citizens having improved values, who can regulate and control their media intake by means of assessing/analyzing the nature of the consumer- and profit-driven media culture, fostering individualism in the mass culture created by the mass media (compare also 2.6.1 and 2.6.2).

5.4 Grounded Theory applied to the development of the model

The basic nature and characteristics of Grounded Theory were also briefly discussed in the introductory chapter (see 1.6.3) and focused specifically on perspectives of the

originating developers of the method, Strauss and Corbin (1998). According to the Grounded Theory methodology, being a qualitative research method and "instrument", research does not start with any theoretical perspective. "Instead, research is used to create or develop theory, which can be supported or refuted, based on further data collection and analysis (....) [and] inductive reasoning. Research begins with questioning or observations and, on the basis of the latter, progresses to formulating (theoretical) propositions" (Du Plooy 2001: 32).

De Vos (1998: 269) emphasizes that Grounded Theory demands the "keeping (of) a balance between creativity and science" which will eventually enable the researcher or analyst "to see research situations and their associated data in new ways, and to explore the data's potential for developing theory". The categories which emerged from the content analysis on the directory of fifty statements, already created suppositions — or tentative theories — on a plausible model for media literacy teaching in South Africa. The advantage of the fact that there is no local model for media literacy teaching, and only few international models to work from, is that the researcher could not really be influenced by such existing theories or models.

This "creation" and "development" of theory can include the proposition of a model by means of which the theory can be simulated and explained. Leedy and Ormrod (2001:155) explicitly say that " a grounded theory study is the one that is *least* likely to begin from a particular framework (...) the major purpose of a grounded theory approach is to begin with the data and use them to develop a theory". This was the case in the current study, where very few fundamental frameworks and models exist to formulate points of departure. It should be mentioned, however, that any prospective media literacy teacher will need to have a *personal framework and normative world view* in order to teach media literacy. (For example, a smoker with no scruples about sexual promiscuity and a strong tendency to purchase "status symbols", with little regard for example for swearing and family values, will possibly not be the ideal media literacy educator (see 5.7 and 5.8).

5.4.1 Advantages of models to support or supplement theories

The conceptualization of a South African model for media literacy teaching originated

from the central notion that there currently exists only marginal consciousness, knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon and process, although many South Africans' exposure to mass media content may be just as high as in the United States or other First World countries with the advent of satellite television. It is for this reason that the first part of the model endeavours to supply reasons and motivation for the necessity of media literacy education. Nowhere in the entire literature survey any type of model was encountered which can explain the "why's" and reasons behind the concept of media literacy, which necessitated lengthy reflections on where to start with the actual lecturing of such a module.

Whereas a theory represents an organized body of theoretical concepts and principles intended to tentatively explain a particular phenomenon, which is supported by the new emerging data (Leedy & Ormrod 2001: 6), this theory can also be **graphically portrayed by means of a *model.*** McQuail and Windahl (1993: 2) consider "a model as a consciously simplified description in graphic form of a piece of reality. A model seeks to show the main elements of any structure or process and the relationships between these elements". These researchers refer to the **advantages of models** in the social sciences in terms of the following functions:

- an *organizing function by ordering and relating systems* to each other and by providing people [researchers and students] with the images of wholes that they might not otherwise perceive;
- a *provision of a general picture* of a range of different particular circumstances;
- an *assistance in terms of explanation*, by providing in a simplified way information which would otherwise be complicated or ambiguous, and so endowing the model with a *heuristic function* since it can guide the student or researcher to key points of a process of system; and
- a facilitation in order to predict the outcomes or the course of events, thereby rendering a *basis for assigning probabilities* to various alternative outcomes, and hence for formulating hypotheses in research.

McQuail and Windahl (1993: 2) distinguish between so-called *structural models* which aim to describe the structure, components and thus the contents of a phenomenon, and *functional models* which describe systems in terms of energy, forces and their

direction, the relations between parts and the influence of one part on another, in this manner explaining the functioning of the process. The mere design of a model is often in itself a worthwhile aim. It can provide a tool for other researchers to use and aid understanding of a process or concept, while it has the added benefit that it is inexpensive. Some of the difficulties pertaining to the development of models, however, are the ultimate accuracy with which the process or phenomenon is explained, and the validation of results of which the researcher is convinced, but has to be explained and justified to others (Goddard & Melville 2001: 43).

The proposed model for media literacy teaching in the South African context falls into both the above categories of *content (or structural)* and *process (or functional)* models. It should be emphasized that this model, as all others, does not suggest that the guidelines and components included therein, is the ultimate and final answer to the teaching of the complex concept and process of media literacy. It rather strives to be used as an aid to stimulate thinking about this abstract and evasive process and content of communication, both on an individual, and mass or societal level. With the aid of this model, any facilitator with marginal knowledge about the communication and mass media disciplines could possibly be enabled to commence an exploration of the relevant field of study.

5.4.2 Applying the phases of Grounded Theory to the development of the model

The proposed model in this study emerged as a result of the process which Leedy and Ormrod (2001: 155) and Neuman (2000: 147) refer to as the **constant comparative method.** Accordingly, the founding fathers of Grounded Theory, Glaser and Strauss (in Strauss & Corbin 1998), maintain that data analysis during this type of research evolves through four typical phases or procedures up to the point of the presentation of the theory or model on the phenomenon under investigation — in this case, media literacy.

i) **Open coding**, where the available data on media literacy are scrutinized for commonalities that reflect specific categories or themes within the data. Examples of these would be:
   - the statements and descriptions of the phenomenon of media literacy;

- the nature and main characteristics thereof;
- the purposes and aims of the concept and process;
- the background of the reasons calling for media literacy;
- the historical beginnings of the movement;
- the key-role players, advocates and organizations leading the discipline to independent acknowledgement as an academic field of study;
- different approaches and perspectives on the teaching thereof;
- identification of the key-role players in the quest for media literacy; and
- envisioned outcomes and results of the teaching of media literacy.

(This resembles the procedure in content analysis as described in 5.2.4.)

ii) **Axial coding,** when interconnections are made among the categories and subcategories in (i) above. During this phase the researcher aims to determine more about each of the stated categories in terms of the context in which it is embedded, the strategies that people use to manage or carry it out, the consequences of these strategies and the conditions that give rise to the phenomenon. Examples of this type of coding in the specific study focuses on:

- the analysis of media content;
- the critical thinking processes applied by media consumers;
- the active role of the receiver rather than the passive role;
- the production skills being developed and resulting from a more critical position towards media content;
- the developing abilities of individuals and people in society to understand the nature and organization of the mass media; and
- the knowledge and skills evolving in people as a result of media literacy teaching.

Open coding is merely a process of reducing large amounts of data to a small set of themes that appears to describe the phenomenon under investigation. (This was executed in a longitudinal manner during the literature survey and the construction of a framework for the contents as grouped into the different chapters. It also, however, emerged as a result of the construction of categories in 5.3.2 in the content analysis, where it became clear that the majority of these

constructs and concepts were already included in terms of literature in the previous Chapters 2, 3 and 4.).

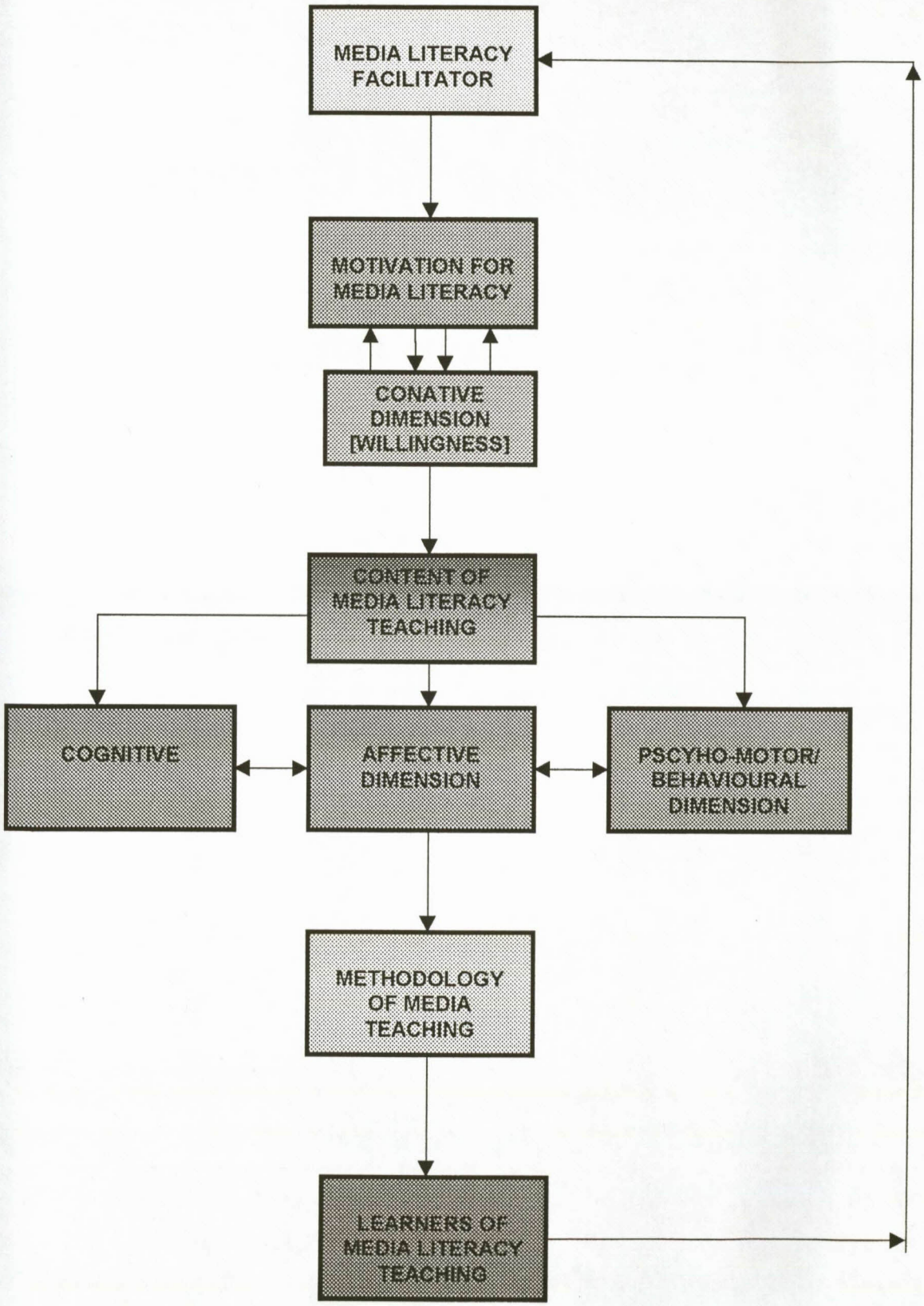
iii) **Selective coding,** where the categories and their interrelationships are combined to form a "story line" which describes "what happens" during the actual process and event of media literacy teaching. The various classification categories of resultant and relevant aspects for the teaching of media literacy were grouped into so-called related blocks or units to structure the content. This is to illustrate the functioning of the model, by indicating the dynamics and interrelatedness of the various units or "content blocks".

iv) **Development of a theory** in the form of a visual model is offered to explain the phenomenon of media literacy and the teaching thereof. The model will depict the nature of the concept and describe how specific pre-conditions will lead to certain knowledge contents, affective integration and resulting psycho-motor skills and behaviour. The model is thus based entirely on the collected data assembled during the research about the phenomenon of media literacy, and on the Grounded Theory steps identified and constructed during the processes of open, axial and selective coding.

5.5 Proposing a model for media literacy teaching on a tertiary level in South Africa

The proposed model features both the process and content dimensions of media literacy teaching. Although media literacy teaching proves to be a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, efforts were made to provide a relatively simple and easy-to-understand model. This uncomplicated model can also be described as a "functional model" in the sense that it can be used by these students as facilitators in various contexts to empower other ordinary citizens and media consumers to become more media literate. These contexts can reveal a less media sophisticated environment due to the historical lack of critical awareness regarding the media experience in South Africa and varying culture and education levels. Against this background the following model is proposed.

Figure 5.1: A proposed model for media literacy teaching on tertiary level in South Africa



The point of departure for teaching media literacy begins with the **facilitator** (see 5.5.1), who should consider commencing the course with motivations why media literacy is so essential. This will include some references to the nature of the media institutions and its functions. The next component depends on this motivation, as learners may not willingly choose to become media literate (see 5.5.2 for explication), and may need to be persuaded to accept the concept of media literacy as valuable. Once again, the arrows run from the conative dimension to the contents of the teaching, which integrate the cognitive, affective and psycho-motor elements — which may overlap and be difficult to separate completely. The methodology of teaching can occur in various ways — innovative and new formulas conceived by creative teachers — to end with the learner of media literacy. The arrow returns to the facilitator, where the current learner can now also become a future facilitator or educator of media literacy in various contexts. Each component of the model will now be discussed in more detail.

5.5.1 Who is the facilitator in tertiary media literacy teaching?



The envisioned context for this model for tertiary media literacy teaching takes a specific rationale and line of reasoning. The realization of media literacy should ultimately be seen on both a micro- (individual media literacy) as well as macro-level (societal media literacy), and even a meta-macro-level (internationally). While the concept of media literacy is still relatively unfamiliar in South Africa, the ever-growing mass media industry — characterized by high consumption statistics about "low-brow" content (see Chapter 3.8.1), rapid diversification in terms of content, merging of certain media, and splintering of genres to feed an increasingly demanding media public and more niche audiences — indicate an urgent need to educate media audiences about the mass media. This would be in order to empower individuals and society as equal partakers in the process of extended and high figures of media exposure and consumption. While this process is already advanced in developed countries, where

children receive media education from the lowest grades in school, a country such as South Africa needs to find a strategic point of departure.

Although it is not ideal to commence with media literacy education only on a tertiary level in South Africa, as this study and model suggests, there are not many options available in this instance. (The ideal would be to start with media consciousness during toddler years when children first become exposed to the media, and as many of the developed countries indeed do (see media literacy typology of Potter (2001, Table 2.1 in 2.6.1). Nonetheless, tertiary learners are very media-attached and media-dependent (in their own opinion, cf. results from UFS media studies third-year classes' assignments and experience of the researcher as lecturer). They are mature enough to understand the potential effects and implications of the mass media. In view of the fact that all students have to have a certain foundational frameworks of thinking, various universities have customary courses such as ethics, values and judgment. Media literacy can be as vital to negotiate the media-saturated environments in which modern man find him- or herself, and could be incorporated in this sphere.

Primarily lecturers with some background in Communication and Media Studies, Education, Languages, Cultural Studies (specifically African Culture Studies), Sociology, Psychology and Gender Studies should be able to comprehend the urgency of media literacy education in the third millennium. They should hopefully be able — with the help of this proposed model and some reading work — to act as facilitators for media literacy courses. It may, in some cases, require higher levels of media exposure in order to find suitable media content to use for teaching. A fundamental and primary media literacy course should not acquire more than 8 credits of learning during the course of one semester (2 hours per week according to SAQA and NQF), and should ideally not cover more than 8 units [themes] of learning.

Even if it is envisioned to subject all tertiary learners, regardless of their choices of study or faculties they study with, to a fundamental course in media literacy, it is more urgent to initially target tertiary learners in the Humanities, Social Sciences and Education Faculties for media literacy education. The mass media and its effects fall into the disciplines of communication, media studies, sociology, psychology, political science, philosophy, education, languages, cultural and gender studies and even

criminology with reference to violence studies. All that is vital, is a resourceful teacher to adapt to the level of learning of the learners' previous experience and knowledge, their dominant media of choices, their levels of exposure and consumption, and their cultures.

The value of such a course is situated in the fact that learners who have completed this fundamental course in media literacy, should be able to continue the process of learning in other contexts and later become facilitators themselves. While media literacy focuses on critical thinking stimulation, it grows in itself — the more questions learners become able to ask about the media's nature, the institutions' characteristics and ideologies, the producers and their aims, its messages/content and its potential effects, the more empowered they become to generate new questions and conclusions. The emphasis, (as mentioned before in Chapter 4.4.3), is on media literacy as a process of life-long learning, in terms of increments, along a continuum, and firstly and lastly focuses on critical thinking about the mass media — not about abolishment, censorship, media-bashing or "spoiling of fun", but rather by empowering media consumers in a functional relationship with the media.

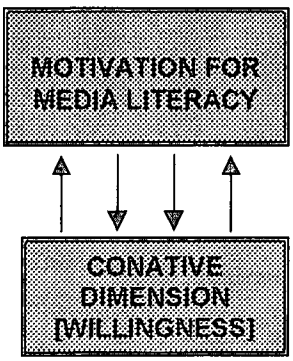
Just as teachers are beginning to insist on additional training in technical literacy in terms of computers and digital media (new media) and social skills training, they also need to demand *media literacy* curricula. Administrators and curriculum directors need to recognize that communication in our society has changed so much that instruction in traditional literature and print communication is not satisfactory anymore. As Worsnop (2000) summarizes: "Modern students are just dripping with media experience, but may be lacking some of the savvy needed to make sense of the experience. Media education is not about teaching kids how to watch TV, but about using the media to help kids make sense of the world around them, and to help them be better learners themselves. It's about savvy." Societal trends, such as smoking, drug and substance abuse, sexual promiscuity and loss of values and a decline in religiousness, and pandemics such as HIV/Aids can all be addressed partly in terms of media literacy education (see 2.3.3). While Education Minister Kader Asmal insists that no teachers may smoke in front of pupils, forming part of an orchestrated Department of Education campaign to address tobacco abuse and dependence (4 April 2003, RSG [*radio*

sonder grense] news broadcast), it can be much more effective to address the associated media content and the images it plants in young minds.

It may be no coincidence that England, being one of the advanced countries with reference to media literacy education, also legally prohibits all media advertisements for tobacco and cigarettes since February 2003. Alvarado, Robin and Wollen (1987: 14) claim that

> [t]he emergence of the media in the school curriculum [in England] has only been achieved by a long and continuous cultural struggle. First there has been the struggle to make educational institutions overcome their fear that the popular pleasures offered by the media did not threaten their own cultural legitimacy and social function *(cf. 2.5.7)*. Second there has been the struggle – and this is still with us – to ensure that the media's culturally heretical force should context educationally the cultural definitions of schooling and not merely be deployed to reinforce them ... Anxieties about the moral influences and effects (invariably bad) of commercial films have been the strongest determinants of media teaching initiatives (1987: 15; *see also 3.5.14*).

5.5.2 The why behind media literacy teaching, and the willingness on the part of the learner to become media literate



The conative pre-condition and requirement for learners to accept media literacy teaching, cannot be underestimated. It can be summarized, as in the resulting definition (see 5.2.6.4) as a willingness to actively participate in critical evaluation of media content, balancing one's own media exposure and diet, and making independent decisions about content. This researcher's personal experience is that many learners, particularly male students for some or the other reason, have an

intuitive expectation that their current media habits may be affected when they become "enlightened", and that this may require them to consume the media more constructively. They are often initially negative, and even arrogant about the module's redundancy in the media age. It is therefore imperative to present learners with irrefutable statistics and research about media consumption, effect studies and the media itself in order to get them receptive (cf. 4.4).

If a learner is not interested in or comprehending the fundamental reasons for this extended form of literacy, the learner will *not* become media literate, except by force, which is the complete opposite of the ideal of media literacy as independent critical thinking, forming part of social responsibility. Media literacy focuses on empowerment, which can only occur from *within* the individual. Explaining the first part of the proposed model on the background of the mass media context and landscape can potentially encourage this willingness. In the course of lecturing media literacy, it was found that learners only commence to comprehend the necessity for media literacy once they are presented with the inescapable facts and aspects contained in the abstractions (which can and should all be verified from literature and research by the learners themselves).

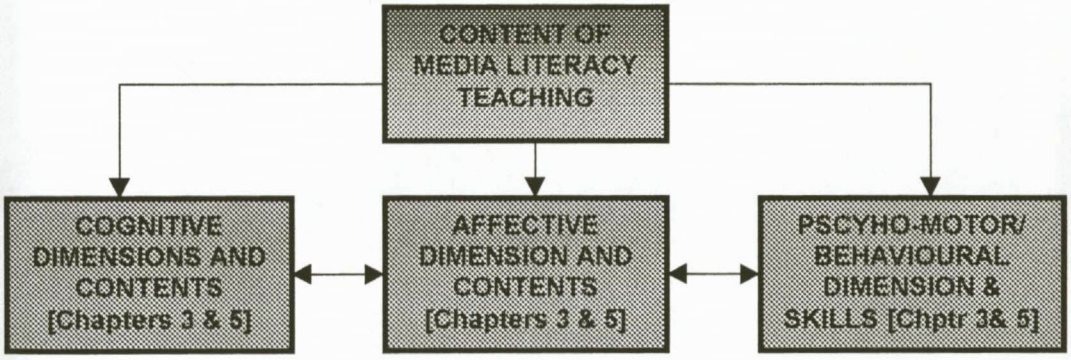
Experience has revealed to the researcher that this aspect usually stimulates lively discussion and critical questioning in class. Not all learners — in this specific case tertiary students — want to accede unconditionally and immediately that the mass media may potentially also be detrimental and negative to them at times. It is as if they sense that their media diet and habits will be affected. The researcher almost got the impression that some learners feel threatened to be severed from their comfort zones and habits of non-discriminatory or uncritical media intake and consumption. This aspect seems evident of the latent control which the mass media and its content may have on viewers. The practice of a media exposure diary works optimally to convince learners of their own levels of media consumption.

One of the primary ambient factors and prerequisites for any introduction to media literacy is to explain to learners that *media literacy is not about abolishment of the mass media or destructive media-thrashing* (see also 2.2). The essence of the process is to establish and nurture a constructive, enjoyable relationship with the mass media and its content with full consideration of related aspects such as the consumer-

and audience-driven nature thereof, and the empowerment of the mass media consumer to navigate the intricate mass media landscape with its many alleged effects and implications on audiences.

It should be noted that there possibly could be resistance to the implementation of media literacy, as it implies work in the process for people who may have been passive receivers of media content. What is of even greater importance, is that this "work" will most certainly involve paradigm shifts on various levels, but the recorded benefits of media literacy (cf. Chapter 2.2.7 and 2.7) can equip the facilitator with enough arguments to placate and even induce the resistant learner.

5.5.3 What should be taught in media literacy education?



The curriculum or syllabi contents of a media literacy course/module should include cognitive, affective and psycho-motor learning contents and skills.

The **cognitive contents** (see 5.3.5.1) aims to focus on:

- a realization and comprehension of the role of audience;
- the analysis, deconstruction and decoding of media messages;
- challenging media traditions and functions;

  and the application of critical thinking applied to various media messages, genres and formats, and even the mass media institutions itself, i.e. about the consumer- and profit-driven characteristics thereof, and economic and political prevalent ideologies.

It should ideally leave the learner with a healthy and independent, individual skepticism about the media, and an improved understanding of the nature of these cultural agents of socialization.

The **affective content** (see 5.3.5.2) focuses *inter alia*:

- on the controlling of media intake by means of diaries and planning;
- and the questioning of existing perceptions to independently distinguish between own and media values, stereotyping, manipulation and propaganda techniques.

It should result in an examination of the learner's own reactions to these type of messages on an emotional level, and a healthy but discerning enjoyment of the media. It should also include a renewed understanding about the latent workings of propaganda and manipulation techniques often used by the media, particularly in advertisements and infotainment, and the rationalization consumers often apply to justify consumption of below-average media content and pulp.

The **psycho-motor skills and learning contents** (see 5.3.5.3) should cultivate skills, amongst others:

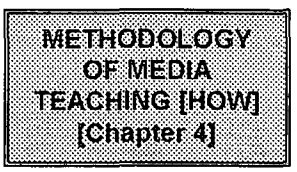
- the inclination and abilities to, for example, to mindlessly watch television or read consumer magazines from habit;
- to negotiate and navigate the media-profuse environment;
- to construct one's own view-points, particularly by means of creating and producing media messages of one's own;
- with an associated comprehension of how deep specific cultural values and stereotyping are embedded in societies.

It could also foster the ability to challenge and contradict the predominant mass and group cultures of i.e. branded clothes. It means, in a nutshell, to take charge of the remote control device and one's own hands and actions, such as slouching on the couch for hours to watch soaps or sport.

The most important shift will indicate a movement from a passive and laissez-fair relationship with the media, to one of conscious and active communication and participation. If learners are not sufficiently convinced of the reasons why such a

paradigm shift is necessary, the process of media literacy will not be fundamentally sound. On the other hand, the discussion of the issues contained in this first part of the model (also discussed in Chapter 3.2 and 3.3) can in itself already bring about an elementary cognizance of media literacy. Various of the media literacy experts and leaders internationally repeatedly emphasized the importance of a basic knowledge of communication, mass communication and the mass media in the earlier chapters in the thesis (see Chapter 3.2.1 to 3.2.3). Without these fundamental "building blocks" in the process of media literacy, problems pertaining to the necessity of media literate citizens and communities may be encountered at a more advanced stage.

5.5.4 How does the facilitator teach media literacy?

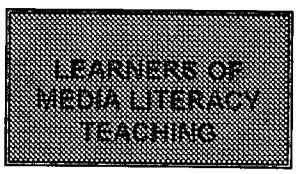


All the mentioned approaches and techniques, and even combinations or parts of these, as assembled and matrixed (in Chapter 4) can be applied by media literacy facilitators, who can in turn become media literacy facilitators, and so disseminate the process of media literacy. While several of these teaching approaches are very elementary and could be applied to any type of media content (see 4.8.1) — from television advertisements to art films, for example — others are quite advanced in nature, and should only be applied during teaching of learners who are already acquainted with specific communication and media terminology (such as the semiotics approach, see 4.8.4).

Chapter 5.7 speculates about the ideal media literacy teacher, and the practical guidelines contained in 5.5 may assist inexperienced media literacy educators to commence with teaching. This researcher recommends that the prospective facilitator commences with a motivation for media literacy (see 4.4.1 or 4.5.2) to lay the table for the next phase, during which the so-called 13 critical questions, applied as a practical exercise to a television advertisement for example, can already clarify to the learner what media literacy is about. In this manner, more difficult terminology and concepts can be gradually introduced to the class. An application of very brief and simple

formulas e.g. the seven easy questions of Medialiteracy.com which concentrate on values (see 4.8.2), or the inquiry model focused on specific issues such as violence in the media (see 4.8.5), can be applied when a fundamental approach in limited lecturing time is needed.

5.5.5 Who learns in media literacy education?



Many and various misconceptions about the *learners* of media literacy prevail, as already explained in Chapter 4.2. The primary learner of media literacy teaching in this model, are students on tertiary level, who eventually should also be empowered to act as facilitators themselves. There are a variety of contexts in which to teach and practice media literacy: public and private schools, churches, synagogues, civic and voluntary organizations serving youth and families (Aufderheide 2001). The concept of so-called "summer camps" offers excellent options in this regard that can be explored within South Africa.

The envisioned result is that a first and primary level of media literacy is accomplished with learners on tertiary level, albeit in limited study areas in the beginning. The possibilities in terms of media which can be applied for learning are endless, particularly with adolescent and young adult learners whose exposure to the mass media are possibly the highest in terms of social activities and leisure time.

There is no doubt that the mass media do succeed in their entertainment escapist functions and responsibilities, according to theories viewing these as some of their main callings and obligations. Substantiating the developmental theory as summarized by McQuail (Oosthuizen 1994), and of which the current South African President is a staunch supporter, a growing number of mass communicators agree that an obligation rests on all mass media to provide a public discussion forum (Du Plessis *Rapport* 2002), and that this responsibility is rather more ethical and normative than legal and functional in nature. This implies, however, that the audience and receivers as vital participants in the communication process *must* become empowered

enough to know about and accept their responsibilities as stakeholders and role-players in this crucial process of interactional and transactional message-sharing.

5.6 Practical guidelines for the implementation of the model for media literacy teaching

A number of guidelines, gathered from personal media literacy teaching experience at the UFS, could be applied with positive results. It has been mentioned earlier (cf. 3.6.1) that South Africa is lagging behind in its total development of the media landscape compared to countries such as the USA or Canada, or even the United Kingdom, but nevertheless current indigenous media development is promising. Nonetheless, most of South Africa's film and television content, as well as DSTV broadcast mostly Western/Hollywood products, putting the consumer on par with First World countries. Magazines are increasingly globalized and are merely South African "franchises" of international glossy magazines (i.e. *Marie-Clarie, Oprah, Elle, Cosmopolitan* and various sports magazines). While the developing countries may not have the same levels of exposure as the masses in developed countries, they may, for example, have been exposed more to the medium of radio (see Appendix C for statistics.)

The model in effect strives to be more fundamental in nature, starting with a motivation of media literacy as concept as well as an explanation of ideal communication, of which media literacy is a manifestation.

5.6.1 Introductory and informative phases of the model and teaching of media literacy

In the introductory and informative phases of a course in media literacy, the following aspects can be kept in mind:

- It is crucially important to inform learners that media literacy is not about taking media pleasures and the fun resulting from the media away from them, but rather to look at these media and messages with a new and informed perspective. This perspective will naturally result in a more discerning and selective media diet.

- It is advisable not to debate or argue too long and intensively with learners who are either contemptuous of the course and its aims, or sceptic that media literacy can be a serious endeavour. While media literacy is essentially about critical thinking (as appears in 5.6), it is generally these resistant and disbelieving learners who are actually prepared to defy the class as a group, who are apt to become critical thinkers.
- An informal and brief class audit of the class compilation in terms of gender, language, racial and cultural groupings and different age groups, together with general preferences of media and specific genres/content should be valuable. When a class is densely populated with females but few males, the men often find it hard to express their perspectives on female stereotyping, sexual exploitation or gender issues. If few common denominators in terms of media content preferences can be found — e.g. a specific film being not as popular with black students as with white students — the lecturer may suggest specific media content from his or her own personal "arsenal" (in terms of stored magazines and newspapers, music compact discs and videos of specific genres). This is non-negotiable for any media literacy facilitator who does have access to a television and video recording player.
- It may be advantageous to emphasize that media literacy classes, being about critical thinking, is indeed about differing viewpoints and various perspectives, since each media consumer may — and possibly do — ascribe different and individual meanings to the media and its messages. Invite learners to bring their own popular media examples to class to set them thinking. Challenge learners to question and offer very individualistic opinions, but remind them that it will be in the nature of debate; not about winning or losing an argument (see class discourses in 4.11.3). Everyone learns from everyone else, including the facilitator/lecturer, who in turn learns from the student. This may initially be a strange experience to some students or cultures, which have never learnt to offer differing opinions. (This researcher has had some B.Comm. students from various racial and cultural groupings, who choose media literacy as an elective in their second year of study, and who expressed their amazement at being invited to differ

from the lecturer and other learners, and still be accepted at face-value as having a completely valid opinion. They expressed their delight with this so-called "novel experience", which may be somewhat disturbing against the background of the university being a fostering mechanism for critical and independent thinking.)

5.6.2 The learning phases of cognitive, affective and psycho-motor contents and skills

The various learning contents could be addressed by means of the following aspects, and preferably in the following order, but not necessarily so:

- The allusion to the important fact that every individual receiver (audience member or consumer) *ascribes his or her own meaning* to the same message from the communicator/producer of media messages, is the vital link to the first learning unit on the nature and characteristics of communication and mass communication, in which the aspect of shared meaning will receive emphasis (see 3.2.2). The desired transactional nature of communication, where all partakers in the message sharing process should be equally empowered, should also receive accent.
- The introduction is facilitated if the concept of media literacy, its origins and current status quo internationally, and the so-*called building blocks and principles* (see Chapter 4.4) can be explained to learners to get a hold on the phenomenon.
- The *history of mass media studies and specifically effect studies* need emphasis, together with the alleged implications on individuals and society as a whole (cf. Chapter 3.4 and 3.5).
- *Theoretical (or academical) issues* (learning contents) which deserve mentioning in the orientational units, should be:
  - functions and characteristics of the mass media (see 3.2.3);
  - the different needs people have in terms of the media, which the latter fulfill (see 3.2.4);
  - the media as agents of culturization and socialization (see 3.2.5); and

- brief reference to the techniques of propaganda and manipulation (see 3.2.5)

- Learners may be required at this stage to keep a media exposure diary for at least 48 hours. They may, for example, also be challenged to distance and isolate themselves from all media, including cell-phones, for 48 hours, which present them with an inconceivable reality "too ghastly to contemplate".

- Various processes and learning contents (cognitive, affective and psycho-motor knowledge contents and skills) will occur simultaneously, and the facilitator should not be too concerned to distinguish *categorically between what type of learning is taking place, but rather evaluate* the outcomes at the end of the lecture. This type of learning needs to involve two other aspects at the same time:
  - The *use of media examples and messages* suggested by learners, or chosen with the facilitator, that all cultures can identify with — involve learners in making choices for ensuing classes (advertisements in all the media, which is the best place to start in view of the briefness of the material), episodes from soaps, sitcoms, cult films and popular commercial videos, documentaries and investigative news programmes, sitcoms, dramas, music videos, daily news bulletins and newspapers, dramas, and even specific issues such as female and racial stereotyping, violence, swearing and profanities, children's programmes for thought-patterns, religion and values, incidents of promiscuous sex etc.
  - All these classes can be conducted by means of any of the suggested methods or even combinations of these (as classified in Chapter 4). Class discussions (see 4.11.3) about the chosen media content are mostly very lively, but the teacher/facilitator should control the discussion with a tight hand and open attitude, particularly when learners of both gender groups and various racial or cultural groups are present. Differences in culture become quite pronounced in discussions about media content. Learners should continuously be challenged and stimulated to do their own research for assignments and practical

exercises, i.e.:

* measuring violence in children's programmes;
* investigating the shop's shelves for computer and video games;
* inspecting the local shopping mall for messages relating to materialism and consumers;
* analyzing a women's magazine (or even a men's magazine) for messages referring to physical acceptability;
* monitoring and comparing tobacco and alcoholic advertisements;
* marking incidences where women are applied as sex symbols to sell products;
* the selection of so-called newsworthy people and items during news broadcasts or in newspapers;
* the identification of propaganda techniques; and
* doing content analysis on top music videos or songs.

- If at all possible, learners can be instructed *to construct and produce their own media messages*: advertisements, news broadcasts, storyboards, short documentaries or dramas (see 4.10). The availability of economic and material infrastructure can certainly be problematic in the developing context of South Africa and limited lecturing time, but production contributes to a comprehension of the complexity of the media industry.

5.6.3 Climate of learning

General guidelines which deserve mentioning:

- Media literacy classes benefit from a discourse-type and informal climate where learners feel free to venture personal ideas about the media, its contents and effects, and even embarrassing personal experiences and fantasies.
- The emphasis must be on *critical thinking, independent perspectives and a willingness from the facilitator to explore suggestions* about specific message contents from learners. (These media literacy classes in this researcher's experience are the only learners who do not want to leave after a period has expired.) What is noteworthy, is that the learners generally

report that their enjoyment of the media and its messages have increased. (Some general hints for media literacy facilitators are also contained in Chapter 5.7.)

5.6.4 Stimulation of critical thinking

It was repeatedly mentioned, specifically by experienced media literacy educators (see Appendix A for statements about the essence of media literacy) that the heart of this field of study (media literacy) can be summarized or embodied as *critical thinking about the media and its contents, functions and implications, amongst others.* While many remarks were encountered in the literature review about the aspect of critical thinking, there were also various references by media literacy scholars to the effect that any "good" teacher knows the basics of critical-thinking stimulation, regardless of the methods that he or she chooses to apply. In addition, the content of the popular media, the so-called "staple-food" of young people, strategically offers an ideal area to apply critical thinking. While there are numerous academic books, specifically in the educational sections, as well as articles from renowned educators (see for examples 4.8.1; 4.8.4) on the Internet, it seems as if the most respected critical thinker and "father" of lateral thinking is Edward De Bono, on an educational as well as popular level.

The inventor of CoRT (Cognitive Research Trust) (1976: 154), Edward de Bono's critical and lateral thinking methods, which has become the most widely used method in the world for the teaching of thinking as a subject in schools everywhere in the world, said that all teaching may be said to be a matter of attention-directing. The CoRT programme teaches thinking skills through the use of thinking "tools" in a formal, focused, and deliberate manner. It operates in a field of creative thinking and the direct teaching of thinking as a skill (2003). From this consideration arises the deliberate and formal tools of lateral thinking, parallel thinking etc. If De Bono's lateral thinking methods are studied, one can immediately realize what excellent material the media offers for this type of teaching.

The teaching of thinking is almost entirely a matter of attention-directing, since there is no new knowledge-content. In the exploration of experience for a specific purpose,

attention tends to follow tracks that have been set up by the learner's experience, his/her emotion locus and field of interests. These attention-directors are operating devices, not passive descriptions. De Bono (1999: v) emphasizes that these devices may not even be refined, because something is done in one way in order to achieve something else. In a recent book, he refers to Einstein who said that "[e]verything has changed except our way of thinking", implying that this because of a lack of critical thinking education.

De Bono lists the following various methods to stimulate critical thinking — which is vital to media literacy and are excellent methods to achieve just that:

- The north-south method: setting up an external reference system to direct attention towards certain things such as other people, consequences etc.
- The bird-watching method: the spotting of certain phenomena or patterns used in thinking, for example the different ways of being stereotyped.
- The apple-boxing method: the sorting of things into categories with the oblique intention that this sorting will lead to close examination of the things themselves, as in the examination of values in media messages.
- The isolation method: isolating certain obvious and automatic areas so that these will get more direct attention, as to commence the thought process.
- The framework method: setting up and using a checklist of attention-areas which are constructed in advance; each attention area or –box is then filled in turn from the situation.
- The process model method: directing attention to some basic processes as distinct from areas: setting up models of the processes and then trying to apply them as in analysis and comparison (De Bono 1976: 155; 2000).

Paul, Binker, Jensen and Kreklau (1990) have developed a list of 35 dimensions of critical thought processes. Many of these methods as well as the logical progression of these skills and abilities can be applied with great success to the teaching of media literacy. The important aspect would be for the media literacy educator to keep a focus on the mass media content as primary field of study. These strategies resemble several of the components of the proposed model for media literacy education.

A. **Affective Strategies**

1 Thinking independently
2 Developing insight into egocentricity or sociocentricity
3 Exercising fair-mindedness [objectivity and neutrality]
4 Exploring thoughts underlying feelings and feelings underlying thoughts
5 Developing intellectual humility and suspending judgment
6 Developing intellectual courage
7 Developing intellectual good faith or integrity
8 Developing intellectual perseverance
9 Developing confidence in reason

B. **Cognitive Strategies - Macro-Abilities**

10 Refining generalizations and avoiding oversimplifications
11 Comparing analogous situations: transferring insights to new contexts
12 Developing one's perspective: creating or exploring beliefs, arguments, or theories
13 Clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs
14 Clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words or phrases
15 Developing criteria for evaluation: clarifying values and standards
16 Evaluating the credibility of sources of information
17 Questioning deeply: raising and pursuing root or significant questions
18 Analyzing or evaluating arguments, interpretations, beliefs, or theories
19 Generating or assessing solutions
20 Analyzing or evaluating actions or policies
21 Reading critically: clarifying or critiquing texts
22 Listening critically: the art of silent dialogue
23 Making interdisciplinary connections
24 Practicing Socratic discussion: clarifying and questioning beliefs, theories, or perspectives
25 Reasoning dialogically: comparing perspectives, interpretations, or theories
26 Reasoning dialectically: evaluating perspectives, interpretations, or theories

C. **Cognitive Strategies - Micro-Skills**

27 Comparing and contrasting ideals with actual practice
28 Thinking precisely about thinking: using critical vocabulary
29 Noting significant similarities and differences
30 Examining or evaluating assumptions

31 Distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts

32 Making plausible inferences, predictions, or interpretations

33 Evaluating evidence and alleged facts

34 Recognizing contradictions

In its simplest sense, critical thinking "involves asking questions, defining problems, examining evidence, analyzing assumptions and biases, avoiding emotional reasoning, avoiding oversimplification, considering other interpretations and tolerating ambiguity" (Wade 1995). Strohm and Baukus (1995) emphasize that dealing with ambiguity is an essential part of critical thinking: "Ambiguity and doubt serve a critical-thinking function and are a necessary and even a productive part of the process". These two references serve as exemplary points of departure to the process of incorporating critical thinking strategies in the teaching of media literacy.

The vital necessity for the teaching of critical thinking in itself is deserving as Olver and Utermohlen (1995:1) point out that:

> students are too often passive receptors of information. Through technology, the amount of information available today is massive ... like to continue in the future. Students need a guide to weed through the information and not just passively accept it. Students need "develop and effectively apply critical thinking skills to the complex problems they will face and to the critical choices they will be forced to make as a result of the information explosion and other rapid technological changes.

Specific methods identified with critical thinking strategies, specifically applied to the terrain of the mass media and therefore media literacy can be any of the following :

- Cooperative learning strategies in group learning situations with feedback from other students and the teacher.
- Case study/discussion methods where the teacher presents a case, story – or media text – to the class without any discussions or conclusions by means of prepared questions on the content.
- Questioning in terms of reciprocal peer questioning and reader's questions. The students must devise their own questions about the subject under

focus, which can then be applied as guidelines for discussion in group context.

- Conference-style learning emphasizes the role of the teacher as a mere facilitator of a so-called conference. Students need to read through relevant material before class, and then ask questions to each other (Underwood & Wald 1995:18).
- Writing assignments.
- Dialogues, both written and by means of spontaneous group dialogue.
- Ambiguity should actually be produced in class by the teacher and students. Clear-cut material should be avoided, and content, which contains conflicting information, should be incorporated increasingly. The mass media content can be extensively applied in this regard.

It is not difficult to see why these methods, applied to the popular media's content, can stimulate learners' thinking. While each of the various approaches and techniques mentioned in Chapter 4 are useful and applicable on different levels with different learners, a resourceful teacher, and even involved parent can apply these techniques of critical thinking in increments.

5.7 Curriculum development for media literacy

In view of the fact that media literacy is still a young teaching subject — indeed an "emerging subject" (Hobbs & Frost 2001) — frequent references are found in literature which pose the question/s: How can we incorporate critical media literacy in the curriculum? (Alverman & Hagood 2000b); Is there a curriculum for media literacy? (Center for Media Literacy 2002 – 2003) and Who teaches media literacy? (Silverblatt undated). These articles and studies indicate that there are still many questions surrounding the matter of a "final" curriculum for media literacy, and explain why so many profit-focused institutions and educators are able to sell complete and self-contained "educational packs", which include the media material to be analyzed, discussed or evaluated, together with instructions on how to do it.

Matters are, however, even further complicated. Carl (2000: 29) maintains that the term "curriculum has so many possibilities of meaning and the manner in which it is

used by various people, contributes to further confusion, cf. also Barrow 1984: 3). Nevertheless, if education is to be effective and learning needs to take place, there is little doubt that those activities which may promote learning — the curriculum — must be planned, says Carl (2000: 31). Oliva (1988: 5 – 6) states that the amorphous use of the term "curriculum" has given rise to various interpretations, but still defines it as the objectives what the curriculum should accomplish; the context within which it develops, i.e. a "specific philosophy of life which may serve as a starting point and which eventually determines the nature of the curriculum"; and the strategies utilized during the process, for example, the critical thinking and inquiry process which is followed as the crucial strategy As became clear from the potential approaches to media literacy teaching, critical thinking and critical inquiry, giving agency to the learner more than the teacher, certainly should form part of the media literacy curriculum.

In an online "Catalog of Teaching Resources: Research and Pedagogy (How to teach media literacy") (undated), compiled by the Center for Media Literacy, an array of teaching methods are suggested and for which so-called curricula are already in existence. Examples of these are:

- "It's all done with mirrors: about television" (Ministry of Ontario 2000), a 16- lesson plan notebook that combines media literacy and tobacco awareness in activities suitable for math, science, language arts, social studies and art classes, complete with handouts and worksheets, and incorporating "critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, group work, research, and written or oral communication.
- "The Hollywood curriculum" (2001), focusing on a journey through the "social curriculum of Hollywood in which 58 motion pictures over the past sixty years are analyzed, using theories of popular culture and social critique to explore how teacher are portrayed and imaged".
- Seeing and believing: How to teach media literacy in the English classroom (Krueger and Christel 2001), a "superb collection of classroom case studies in which two master high school teachers share the units, lesson plans, writing assignments and student

projects they have honed and tested in their classroom of media literacy ... for teaching critical thinking through the media".

- "Image matters. Visual texts in the classroom." This book from Australia, written by Callow (1996) outlines "practical classroom activities to explore visual literacy at the elementary level".

The matter of a media literacy curriculum is convoluted by the immense wealth of media material, which can be used for media literacy teaching. Not only are there increasingly more media to explore, but are genres expanding on a regular basis. Since media literacy additionally involves both the reading [decoding] as well as the production [encoding] of media messages, the competencies, knowledge contents and skills pervade many content areas and can as such be integrated across the traditional curricula. In the same manner that reading and writing are required skills beyond language curricula, media literacy, because of the omni-presence and pervasiveness of the media in all spheres and levels of society and life (cf. Worsnop's "manifesto" for the inclusion of media literacy right across the curriculum in 4.13) can be included or "wedged" into all other school subjects (cf. Media Literacy Resource Guide of the Ministry of Ontario, undated).

This may explain why Shepherd (1992) labels media literacy education as the "perfect curriculum". Shepherd claims that "if we put the child at the centre of the curriculum, and recognize children as first and foremost seeking for meaning, then the centrality of media education becomes obvious ... The goal of media education is critical autonomy". The media literacy curriculum, according to Shepherd, should "involve analysis, examination and synthesis, moving back and forth between the cognitive and affective domains, as students explore and discover" meaning is central. Psycho-motor development enters the equation during production activities and the changing of media habits. It can include many issues, e.g. stereotyping, violence, anti-racist education, sexism and feminism, promiscuity, values etc.

This explains why the references to a "framework" or "technique", "approach" or "discourse or identity kits", rather than the classification of a curriculum, are frequently found in the media literacy teaching literature. The Center for Media Literacy

(undated) emphasizes that "media literacy is not about content, it is about process. It is not a new subject to teach, but rather a *new way of teaching,* using the media and their messages to help students learn basic skills such as critical thinking, evaluating information, detecting bias, persuasion and more. **It is such a constantly changing field, there is no curriculum set in stone.** The grade you teach and your subject areas would influence the materials you use – and some of the best materials are all for free" (bold highlighted by researcher).

This can leave the teacher or assessor of media literacy at an impasse where to commence with the teaching if there then are endless possibilities of curriculum design and subject inclusion. Research such as that of Toohey (1999) can assist the new media literacy teacher on how to make strategic decisions, which must be made before a course can begin. Toohey provides realistic advice for university and college teachers on how to design effective courses "without ever underestimating the complexity of the task facing course developers ... examining fully the challenges involved in leading course design teams, getting agreement among teaching staff and managing organizational politics". The latter aspects are all important to consider in view of media literacy teaching being a newcomer to the educational world, on which there can be many various perspectives.

Biggs (1999) also supplies valuable leadership and insight on how academics can improve their teaching in today's circumstances of large classes and diverse student populations, which are especially critical in South Africa. While he suggests a practical approach, it is by no means prescriptive and gives latitude to teachers on teaching and assessment methods to suit their particular circumstances and demographic class profiles. For this, he says, "a conceptual framework ...[rather than a curriculum] ... is described whereby university teachers can readily adapt the ideas to their own subjects and teaching conditions". In this regard, the definition and research of Gustafson & Branch (1997), titled *Instructional Development,* is extremely useful, since it evolves around four aspects:

- analysis of the setting and learner needs;
- design of a set of specifications for an effective, efficient and relevant learner environment;

- development of learner and management material; and
- evaluation of the results of the development, both formatively and summatively. (This so-called ID-model has the added benefit of a semblance to the systems theory and model of communication.)

5.8 Potential obstacles to the teaching of media literacy in South Africa

Media literacy, as practiced in First World countries, and media literacy as envisioned in South Africa, may also differ in terms of potential obstacles (see discussion in 5.8) to be cleared prior to the proper implementation of media literacy as acknowledged and independent study field and curriculum. Many of the mentioned countries such as the USA, Hawaii and Japan have had to deal with initial resistance to the unfamiliar concept and process as well (Lum 2001).

5.8.1 Government prioritizing

Since 1994, new requirements with regard to the schooling of the masses of children in South Africa came to the fore. Curriculum 2005 was proposed, implemented, then changed again, and is currently under question. At the time of writing this thesis, the subjects for South African Grade 10 to 12 learners had been abruptly "trimmed" by South African Minister of Education and the Government from a previous 124 subjects to a mere 35, including languages (South African Ministry of Education, 2002 [Online]).

The current informational and technological skills and knowledge contents require from learners to bring about enormous paradigm shifts in terms of education. Whenever a teaching system of a country is under pressure, the popular media may just be the last area of study which academics want to concern themselves with. No evidence could be found however, that the implementation of media literacy as a school curriculum on all levels is a prerequisite for the eventual outcome of media literate citizens and societies. The point where media education is started, is of no real relevance during the first and initial phases of the process — what is of importance, is rather that there are some specific attempts to foster the ideal of media literacy.

The earlier-mentioned isolated article on media literacy and education in this country argues as follows:

> In South Africa we now have a new national curriculum, which accommodates media education — however, the time has come for us to stop living in the shadow of the dominant trends of international Media Education [sic.]. We need an African Media Education which takes into account our cultural and political heritage and which also finds ways of applying its skills to address the daunting challenges which face our newly democratic country (The Virtual School undated).

While this notion may seem optimistic, it at least addressed the matter head-on. The current incorporation of media education into schools mainly occur by means of the application of certain media texts, in particular advertising, to core subjects such as Human and Social Sciences, Languages, Literacy and Communication, Economic and Managerial Sciences, Arts and Culture, and Life Orientation.

5.8.2 National transformation, depression and learner apathy: loss of critical thinking skills

The future of South Africa has become more realistically tempered as time passes by since the 1994 democratic elections. The revolutionary passion and its associated energy which was evident after the release of Nelson Mandela, and the establishment of the new democratic Government has drained away, causing a colossal loss of critical skills, "which were used to disarm Apartheid – we very rarely draw on these skills to develop the new democracy. There is a sense of having won the battle and so the critical armour is no longer needed. Unless there is a deliberate effort to maintain and advance the media and information skills of citizens in formal and public education there is a real danger of erasing the gains made in the last days of Apartheid" (Virtual School undated; Gastrow 2003).

It has been the sobering experience of the author, being a lecturer in media studies and media literacy in particular, that the age of sick notes for learners with sinusitis, diarrhea, flu and colds seems to have receded, only to be replaced by dozens of doctors' certificates for depression [bi-polar and reactive], anxiety states and nervous breakdowns (cf. Chronicle of Higher Education 2001; Kaplan 2002; New York Times 2002; Patterson 2003; Time 2001: 51 – 53;).

The cost, in terms of a society in transformation, exerts tremendous demands on all citizens and communities, and the tertiary institutions may suffer the most under this situation, as all current learners are required to find prospective suitable and well-paying jobs after finishing their studies. Affirmative action has taken its toll, and learners of all races feel despondent about their future in this country. Against this background, media literacy is not one of the highest priorities for these learners — learners, and in fact all people will actually rather prefer to escape into the mass media and so avoid any degree of media literacy. The user and gratification theory (see 3.4) emphasizes the escapism aspect of the mass media for users. Learners may however be motivated by the fact that the media industry cannot appoint media workers who are not marginally media literate, and thus even basic media literacy skills should serve as an added incentive for potential employers during the job-hunting phase.

Media education offers school and adult learners an opportunity to become citizens who are active in a media society — a society in which many were previously inactive because of their apathy or because of restrictions on their participation. The skills which media education offers to animate this social action are exactly an extension or supplement of what some researchers and academics have called "critical literacy". This type of socially oriented and active critical literacy has been called *critical citizenship* or *civic courage*. The term "media literacy" should therefore not blind teachers and learners to the fact that it does not really differ from critical thinking practices.

5.8.3 Ignorance about media literacy

The ignorance about the phenomenon and process of media literacy may well be a deterring factor in the quest for this ideal. Many new concepts and terminology appear regularly in the media, bookshops, conversations between people and communities and society at large. Terms such as "existentialism", "post-modernism" and "globalization" were and are all modern innovations, which are diffused quite rapidly through society. An exact knowledge of all the implications of such a particular word has not been a condition for consciousness about the meaning of the word or term. Media literacy will, once it has been established as a generally-used word in society,

become entrenched, and perceptions of the process and phenomenon will grow as individual members of society start using it during conversations.

5.8.4 Elitism with regard to media literacy

According to the results of a study quoted by Art Silverblatt (1995: 3), it seems people had little difficulty seeing the influence of the media on others, but that these same people were unable to recognize the impact of the media on their own lives, confirming that: *the more people deny the personal influence of the mass media, the more susceptible they are to media messages.* It would seem from various studies that educated people are often more embarrassed to admit that they watch popular programmes, whilst they are just as susceptible to the influence of media messages as the general population.

A fundamental step in media literacy therefore involves an awareness that one self — like all other people — daily receives numerous messages through the mass media and that these messages can affect one's own behaviour, attitudes and values, even if reception can be unpremeditated. The fact that more educated people are applied in the teaching of media literacy is problematic against this background of elitism. This may very well once again be an indicator of where to start with the consciousness-raising process of media literacy.

5.8.5 Audience behaviour patterns and expectations

According to Silverblatt (1995: 4), audience members select only the most pertinent bits of information to store and assimilate into meaning for themselves. However, whilst they are engaged in the media, they are often involved in competing activities. Because of the media consumer's focus on other activities [e.g. driving, cooking], he or she may be more susceptible to subtle messages that can affect his or her attitude, thinking and behaviour. Lapses of concentration or involvement with the message may also alter the original meaning intended by the communicator (see 3.2.3 to 3.2.5).

With reference to audience expectations, need typologies instruct that people use the media for a multitude of reasons, e.g. for unwinding after a stressful day at work or

school, company, escapism from personal problems or advice on specific life issues. Silverblatt (1995: 5) refers to Mitroff's and Bennis's (1989) contention that the complexities of modern societies and life have intensified the individual's need for order and meaning, which he or she allegedly finds in media content and formats. "As reality become more complex, so complex that no one single individual could understand all the forces and patterns unleashed, we retreated more and more into the invention and proliferation of self-contained worlds of unreality over which we could maintain the illusion of control".

Media reality is an alternative to reality — thus actually an unreality — that is simplistic, entertaining and satisfying, according to Silverblatt (1995: 5). Potter underlines this danger of having our sense of reality taken away from us by the media, as opposed to the alternative of "taking control of our lives" (2001: ix). Many media consumers however underestimate the effort, which is required of them to access and comprehend specific media contents and formats, and even the media itself. Television and film are mostly noted for pleasure processing without major effort — hence the so-called couch potatoes and "screenagers" (Kipping 1995). Media literacy teaching and learning will obviously generate deeper involvement and more effort, which could be pleasurable to many learners.

5.8.6 Teaching system and teachers training/education

It is a well-established fact that this country does not have sufficient numbers of well-trained and equipped teachers for the multitudes of learners circulating through classes. It has been alleged in several respects that South Africa ranks disturbingly low on the standards of training internationally (Broere, Geyser & Kruger 2002; SAUVCA Position Paper 2002). According to the news media, national and provincial budgeted money by Government disappears on large scale, and reports are rife about schools who do not yet have any books for learners to learn from (Fourie 1999:7; Lorgat 2002). During February 2003, the daily *Mail & Guardian* (editorial 2002) featured a report on the elimination of school libraries by Provincial Governments as a result of inadequate funds.

5.8.7 Inadequate teaching resources, and teaching fatigue and apathy

In terms of a lack of eager, well-trained and motivated teachers, inadequate resources e.g. books, classroom-equipment and too many pupils per class, teachers in South Africa are completely overburdened by their plights, and appallingly many teachers seem to be infected by HIV (*Die Burger* Editorial 2002). To add another demand in terms of media literacy teaching, can certainly be counter-productive. Once again, however, media literacy does not have to become embedded in the South African context via universities, as there are several other routes to disseminate the notion of media education.

5.8.8 Affective nature of media content

Silverblatt (1995: 4) argues that the visual and auditive media and stimuli in particular touch people on an emotional or affective level, and he quotes Gombrich (1974) who observes that "the power of visual impressions to arouse our emotions has been observed since ancient times ... preachers and teachers preceded modern advertisers in the knowledge of the ways in which the visual image can affect us, whether we want it to or not. The succulent fruit, the seductive nude, the repellent caricature, the hair-raising horror of all can play on our emotions and engage our attention." This fact of emotional and affective involvement will often occur on a subconscious level without people being aware of this interaction with the media. This makes the mass media and content indeed a formidable force to reckon with. It is possible that people will not voluntarily want to relinquish these emotional and affective attachments.

5.8.9 Monetary and economical resources

The starting-ground for media literacy education, namely the school, at this moment of the country's transformational development, currently battles with a backlog of monetary and economical resources to improve the infra-structure in schools. Media resources may be an advantage, if not critical requisite, when it comes to the teaching of the media. It will be extremely problematic if teachers have no access to any types of books, magazines, newspapers, video equipment and film or any advertisements.

Compared to advanced media literacy laboratories of developed countries, where production of media messages are a vital phase of the teaching process, this may pose a potential problem with regard to media literacy education. It was, however, repeatedly mentioned in Chapter 4 that an excellent infrastructure and advanced equipment are not necessarily prerequisites for media literacy teaching, as old magazines, newspapers and the radio can be put to use as well.

5.8.10 Illiteracy

It has been mentioned earlier in the thesis that South Africa still battles with a high percentage of illiteracy, which also has implications in terms of unemployment, poverty and crime. Research has proven however, that illiteracy is on the rise internationally (Citizens for Commission Human Rights 1995). One of the major benefits of media literacy with reference to pictorial, visual and auditive media is indeed the fact that the learner does not have to be literate in the traditional sense. Evidently these learners will not have access to the print media [newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, posters and billboards for example], but the process can also be applied to visual advertisements and children's stories on television amongst others.

5.8.11 Poverty and unemployment

Growing poverty and unemployment increasingly cause fewer people to have access to the mass media, as this could be a luxury in the absence of basic commodities such as food, houses, water and an income. Maslow's hierarchy of needs has never been proven invalid since its inception, and people will rather tend to try and satisfy basic needs such as hunger, protection and clothing before they consider mass media purchases. Once again however, media literacy can even be developed with regard to radio — a medium found in 91% of all households in South Africa (SAARF 2002, see Appendix B).

5.8.12 Socio-economic climate e.g. lawlessness and crime (media saturation and selective perception)

The optimism following the elections in 1994 in South Africa has had many negative implications as well. Unemployment and poverty have caused crime to soar to

unknown heights, and the media sensationally report about all these incidents. Too many citizens complain about the coverage of violence and crime, e.g. farm murders, and state categorically that they do not want to read or hear about, as they cannot do something about it. Almost every person in this country knows another who has been a victim of crime, and the less they feel they know about it, the less they have to worry about their well-being. The selective perception – or denial – resulting from this "syndrome" perpetuates the intake of mainly sensational and shallow media content in order to avoid negative input about crime and violence, unemployment and poverty.

5.8.13 Geographical distances and isolation, and diversity and ethnicity

Eventual media literate citizens even in rural areas in South Africa is an ideal as well. The fact that numerous people do not have access to educational facilities and schooling, and the mass media, cannot discount those citizens who find themselves in centers where the teaching of media literacy is fully viable. Another sad aspect of South Africa is that only approximately 3.5 million of the more than 40 million citizens have computer and Intranet infrastructures and access (SAARF 2002; see Appendix B). Once again, these figures cannot restrain the process of media literacy education in centers where the majority of people are acquainted with these media.

5.8.14 Different cultures and sub-cultures, and diverse tradition and value systems

It needs to be accepted that the teaching of media literacy will be simpler and could occur faster if all people belonged to the same culture in view of the larger contexts of cultural studies during media literacy education. All media products are contextualized in certain cultures. In view of the fact that the mass media has an undeniable link with the creation and dissemination of culture, it naturally follows that a large number of cultural groupings will necessitate more diverse forms and texts of media literacy. It cannot be expected that adolescent white English girls, as an example, must know the cultural instructions of adolescent black SeSotho boys. Likewise, a heterosexual youngster will encounter problems to decode media messages aimed at homosexual teenagers, as they will be analyzing the text according to different frameworks of

reference. Media literacy teaching may indeed serve as a bridge between the various and diverse groupings and cultures contained in this country.

5.8.15 Nature of programming and credibility of the media

The essential core of the mass media can be pinned down to a consumer-, profit- and market-driven industry in which almost all the content is aimed at gaining money by sales and advertising revenue (see 3.2.3). This aspect is one of the primary building blocks in the comprehension of the reasons — the *why's* — behind media literacy. Ideally and originally, the mass media have been based on functional theories such as information, education and development of receivers, but in view of the ever-increasing competition for audiences and consumers, these social laws become increasingly obscure and misunderstood. The more people learn about this nature and characteristics of the mass media, the sooner they grow into media literacy. It may even result in media literate persons losing all belief in the mass media eventually, but the ideal of media literacy is actually still to enjoy the media regardless of these previously-mentioned aspects.

5.8.16 Different value systems

Once again, this problem is not unique to the South African scenario, but is indeed a growing crisis internationally. Audiences become ever more diverse and need-specific, which in turn result in increasing media formats and messages striving to satisfy niche audiences with unique needs and values. In South Africa, in particular, the various ethnic, language and gender groupings can complicate media literacy teaching in the sense that it might be difficult to find applicable media content, for example, for a diverse class of learners at a tertiary institution. All these ethical and language groupings have their own cultural and religious preferences and frameworks of mind. It is indeed not rare to find a collection of learners which may include very traditional, religious, Christian and value-orientated learners as opposed to some value-repelled groups who may be completely modern, non-religious and New Age. The selection of applicable media content and formats could be problematic to the teacher/s, but if the situation is explained adequately to the learners, together with a

creation of expectations for rotating content and formats, this problem can be overcome.

5.8.17 Complexity of the media language

While a traditionally-literate person (one who is literate in the standard sense of the word; see 2.4.1) has certainly had a basic and fundamental measure of education, and this will always be vital for media literacy with reference to the printed media. However, media literacy requires an additional understanding of the sign and symbol system of the mass media. Silverblatt (1995: 6) emphasizes the observations of two prominent media literacy leaders, David Considine and Gail Haley (1992) that audiences still underestimate the complexity of the media and media messages. "Most Americans still perceive the media image as transparent, a sign that simply says what it means and means what it says. They therefore tend to dismiss any intensive explication as a case study of reading too much into it". Media workers and professionals are a creative group of professionals who were trained to know and apply the subjective language of the media to influence audiences and attain certain goals e.g. the increase of sales and circulation figures and the popularity of a chosen politician or political party. A basic knowledge of media production elements can already enhance any learner's understanding and appreciation of media content, leading to an increased level of communication in terms of "sharing of meaning".

The above obstacles should not restrain the teaching of media literacy. One of the advantages of media literacy education, is that there is literally a wealth of media and media formats/texts to focus on. It is, however, accepted that any tertiary institution of education will be in a situation where aspects such as illiteracy, geographic distances and inadequate media resources/facilities such as a television or multi-data equipment are not problematic. The prospective media literacy educator in South Africa needs to be very sensitive to differences between learners of different ethnical, language and cultural groups. Learners who are previously-disadvantaged may not be up to speed with the new and "hypermedia", and it is therefore recommended that educators commence with the traditional mass media and messages as focal points.

5.8.18 Intertextuality

In view of educational terms which are sometimes shifting, impractical or exclusionary, Giles and Macaul (2000: 208) offer a concept to integrate theory and practical media literacy teaching as a solution. By intermediality, they mean "the ability to critically read and write with and across varied symbols systems", whereas "[r]eading refers to active, critical construction of meaning of texts in books, films, television programs, TV commercial, website or music videos." Writing refers to the generation of varied texts, including life actions by means of and through multiple media forms, serving as a "bridge among ideas, disciplines, people, texts, processes ... contexts, educational purposes and outcomes, theory and praxis". Luke (in Giles & Macaul 2000: 209) emphasized that "intermediality is the foremost critical media literacy, in terms of teaching analytic skills." The end result is increased literacy as well as socially just, democratic, humane and ethical actions in and out of the classroom.

This reference again shows the multiple meaning of the concept and process of media literacy. The phenomenon refers to an understanding of the various mass media's contents, and the ability to change back and forth in the analysis and evaluation of these messages. Intertextuality can therefore only be described as an approach to the teaching of media literacy, but also constitutes a certain definition of what it is. It can be concluded from this that there are many facets and interpretations of this abstract and ambiguous concept, which necessitated the clarification of both the meanings of media literacy as well as potential approaches to and techniques of teaching the subject.

5.9. Stakeholders and role-players in the process of media literacy teaching in South Africa

The groups which have emerged from the analysis of media literacy descriptions and definitions (see also Appendix A and 5.2.4.1) are citizens in society, children and adults, parents, churches, audiences, students and learners, schools, media industry, media institutions and media workers and professionals. This makes it clear that ALL people indeed should become media literate, and that there are virtually no exceptions to the rule. Downs (2001) emphasizes:

> We need workers with the modern ability to access, analyze, evaluate and produce information, so in a sense, media literacy is a vocational mandate ... we believe the urgency goes much deeper than education in a world awash with images, where our culture and society are profoundly integrated with and shaped by mediated messages. The ability to process information is imperative to personal survival.

Many of these so-called new thoughts which are provoked by the current abundance of the media are not so new. Kierkegaard, according to Taylor and Saarinen (1994), was the first philosopher to realize the importance of the media. He insisted that the mass media of his day – the press – transformed responsible individuals into passive "ciphers" (Taylor & Saarinen 1994). By developing a so-called edifying philosophy, Kierkegaard attempted to call people back to themselves, by providing the occasion for the self-consciousness necessary for autonomous individuality. In his authorship, he creates contrasting personae projecting imaginary worlds (resembling Erving Goffmann's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* 1963). The style of the particular writing reflects the style of life and vice versa. When composing his works, Kierkegaard did not remain cloistered in his study but took to the streets in an effort to create a public image that would advance his religio-philosophical enterprise and he described this complex strategy as indirect communication.

Eventually it cannot be expected of a few media literacy educators to integrate the subject of media literacy into society. The primary place where media literacy should be practiced is still the home. If the parent/s are not concerned about potentially harmful media content, the children will rarely acquire any measure of media literacy. It has been said repeatedly that many average citizens will not want to become media literate, as it may cost them hours of interaction with worthless media content of inferior quality.

In First World countries, there are numerous organizations consisting of concerned educational and community leaders, such as psychologists, pastors and ministers, politicians and educators. Websites of these key-role players on the Internet, with many suggestions and guidelines for parents in particular, are rife. Thoman (1995) summarizes, as she says that "[a]lthough most adults today learned through literature

classes to distinguish a poem from an essay, it is amazing how many people do not understand the difference between a daily newspaper and a supermarket tabloid".

Media literacy eventually should become a progressive movement, and can be visualized in terms of a climbing spiral. The more people will take note of the concept, aims and benefits of media literacy, the more people will be affected. If media institutions, professionals and workers [e.g. journalists] can acquire media literacy skills and knowledge, the quality of the general media content should improve.

A social and sports commentator, Gary Stroebel, on *OFM* in Bloemfontein (Radio Oranje), a commercial radio station, referred to the reality-television series of Big Brother II in the following terms: You can only be a competitor "if you are drunk half the time, swear like a trooper and are completely disgusting" (confirmed in interview with Gary Stroebel, 7 October 2002, Bloemfontein). This statement testifies to some grade of media literacy. If more media professionals were prepared to share their personal perceptions like this, it would be already one step in the media literacy direction. "The media have an obligation to provide a fuller interpretation of the truth", say Hiebert and colleagues (1991: 445). This is echoed by Graham (in Kieran 1998:163), as he urges that "[i]f there is reason to be concerned about the level of depicted sex and violence in our culture, it is not protection from harm by government or law we should look for, but more active, less passive conceptions of journalism and the arts".

With reference to the "primary" educator, the parents, Bianculli (1992: 87) suggests that parents, before the start of the 20th century, were able to control the amount and content of their children's knowledge of the "big wide world". Authority figures were seldom if ever challenged, and concepts clashing with the parents' social beliefs could be withheld from the child merely by keeping all printed matter and adult discussion out of their reach. In this context, "out of sight, out of mind" meant controlling what they knew and when they knew it. Literate children could read only what they could obtain – and those who could not read at all, were excluded even more hopelessly and completely from a wider range of intellectual experience.

Media literacy education can optimally be accomplished if parents, educators and society become involved by means of discourses and debates. Almost every school has debate and public speaking societies, where media literacy can be applied as

point of discussion. Because the mass media are so pertinent in the social context and relationships between people, learners in media literacy classes will most certainly involve parents, friends and acquaintances in conversations about media events and contents.

As mentioned earlier, the growth of the media literacy movement, even in First World countries, have indeed been slow, maybe because of the fact that teachers have been hesitant to delve into the world of media literacy. The media have the advantage, however, of being a tool for learning about the world, for entertainment and for relaxing. Educators should realize that it is a powerful tool that shapes the minds of children and, as suggested by Steyer (2002) in his groundbreaking book on the impact of the media, sometimes take the place of parents as the resident educator in the home.

From awareness of the need, to the *how* to: another one of the problems has been due to the fact that teachers need to be provided with the opportunity to develop their own understanding of the complexities of mass media and how to critically analyze it. Educators need some training in the subject. Kubey (1996) answered a teacher, who wished to pursue training to teach media literacy in public schools, as to where she could start her graduate studies, that only a "few schools would even allow her to utilize her skills and she might have to do an independent study in the field." (To date, most media literacy degrees are offered by schools and universities in Europe.)

5.10 The ideal media literacy educator

The role of the media literacy educator in the process of media literacy teaching cannot be underestimated on the one hand, and neither over-emphasized on the other. Certainly not every teacher can volunteer to offer media literacy, just as not all teachers have adequate mathematical knowledge and skills to teach mathematics, or enough historical information to teach history. Comparatively speaking however, it would be easier for all educators to become involved in the teaching of media literacy in view of the fact that every person in society comes into contact with the mass media and its messages. He or she must also possess a certain framework of reference with regard to societal values and norms, and should have a certain framework of reference

with regard to values. However, as with most other matters in life, a certain amount of passion about and comprehensive involvement with the mass media will aid the teaching process of media literacy.

A specific condition required on the part of the teacher, which will simplify the teaching of media literacy, *is intensive contact with as much contemporary contents of the mass media:* the current films on circuit, both excellent and mediocre newspapers to compare news values, different niche as well as consumer magazines, access to radio stations, surfing the WWW and communicating interactively on the Internet. It is not negotiable for any media literacy teachers/educators not to receive substantial monetary support from the teaching institution where they are employed, because these educators should have access to satellite dish-programs, subscription fees for magazines and newspapers as well as usable equipment in terms of video-taping applicable programs for students.

The ideal media literacy educator will be aware of the fact that the modern generations of the third millennium has extended access to the media of all types. These knowledge sources and levels of data processing have empowered and equipped young people with knowledge and skills to interact differently with information, compared with previous generations. Many familiar communications media — including television, movies, radio, newspapers, magazines, and books — are essentially linear. The users of those media have little if any control over the information they receive. They follow the flow of information from beginning to end along a path determined in advance by the providers of the information (cf. "The Nintendo Generation" undated).

The millennial generation prefers their information to arrive in "interactive" forms, and are especially drawn to Internet information channels (Fourie & Codrington 2003). They have a much higher "information overload" threshold, but have been forced to make drastic changes in how to process and learn information. This has been largely misunderstood by older generations that attempt to force them into the older methods of linear processing.

Teachers in various subject disciplines such as literature, social science, and the humanities have regularly incorporated critical thinking strategies along with traditional print texts: well-developed analyses of novels, poetry, historical and cultural documents etc. The addition of developmental cognitive strategies relevant to "media texts" may foster a more ecological-valid, critical thinking aptitude for young generations learners and should be a component of any contemporary teacher education program. The repeated appearance of the aspect of critical thinking in the earlier content analysis testifies of the importance of the inquiring nature of media literacy.

Educators involved in media-based learning initiatives are capable of invigorating traditional curricula plans with contemporary media objectives. Hart (1997: 91) emphasizes that the earlier perception of mass media analysis was misconstrued and reduced to studies of media aesthetics, film reviews and music appreciation whereas the modern interpretation, emphasizing media motive and construction, has been misunderstood, as is explained in the following quotation:

> The role of teacher educators in this process is crucial. We need to help schools and teachers not to ignore the media, nor to condemn them, for the media cannot simply be counteracted with a forced diet of high literary culture. The media need to be approached seriously and systematically in the classroom as a way of promoting spiritual and moral development in students ... Many teachers of English have the basic skills to help in this, because of their special expertise in engaging and developing the imaginations of students. Yet we need to provide more and better training to help them in the process of de-coding culture (Hart 1997: 92).

In order to connect to many diverse and often disadvantaged learners, teachers and the curricula cannot afford any longer to operate remote and separated from culture and the life-skills of the learners being taught. There are currently too many societal, welfare, economical, political, emotional and psychological problems, besides very basic issues such as poverty, illness (HIV/Aids and Hepatitis A) and health, hunger and homelessness, drug and substance abuse, low self-esteem and loss of identities. This still results in many children scorning the benefits of schooling by devaluing academic skills, seeking a life outside of schools. On the other hand, school systems

and governments battle with less money available for education and teachers seeking other more rewarding careers and jobs. In view of the technological mass media revolution, teachers also need to learn continuously, becoming equipped for more demands on knowledge and skills just to keep up.

South African scholars Young and Regnart (1992: 5) were concerned in 1992 already, stating that "there is not yet in this country, regrettably, a school subject called 'media literacy', nor even one called communication or media studies'. In other countries, notably Britain, Communication Studies is an A-level, examinable subject". In addition to the reasons mentioned earlier about the possible delay of media literacy development in South Africa (e.g. the political transformation, press censorship, late import of the television medium), there are other potential causes which may explain why media literacy is still an absent phenomenon in this country, and which may also hamper the future development of the subject and field of study.

5.11 Conclusion

The many literature references to the body of knowledge on media literacy, being fragmented and non-specific, necessitated a thorough investigation of these descriptions by various media literacy scholars and organizations. The popularity and presence of websites on the Internet clearly indicate that media literacy is viewed as a contemporary subject and skill, particularly with a view to the interactive media such as computers, e-mail, the Internet and computer games. Quite often the popular websites, although driven by acknowledged academics and tertiary institutions such as universities, prefer a popular and non-academic approach to the aspect of media literacy. This may also result from the element of popular culture in the mass media, which need to be met on its own terms.

The selection of fifty [50] different media literacy definitions and descriptions by diverse role-players in the field was subjected to qualitative content analysis. Constructs which presented itself repeatedly, were classified into nine distinct categories or groupings, namely the cognitive, affective, conative and psycho-motor or behavioural aspects; the possible techniques and approaches which can be applied to the teaching of the subject; the reasons calling for a subject such as media literacy as well as the aims of

media literacy teaching; the focus areas to be addressed; and lastly who should the educator or teacher be, and who should be the ideal learner, all represented in the model.

The methodology of content analysis could be applied positively to catalogue the attributes of media literacy with a view to obtain a summative view of the phenomenon, which categorizes content analysis as a type of descriptive research. The blending of content analysis and Grounded Theory techniques worked optimally in the disentanglement of a clear *albeit* lengthy definition of media literacy.

What clearly emerged from the content analysis and ensuing coding processes, is that media literacy should emphasize the aspects of critical thinking, mindful media exposure and digestion of media messages, acute questioning about the producers' intentions and framework, and reflection and judgment. What is also emphasized, is the growing ability to make own decisions about media exposure, and active participation in the process of communication, enhancing the ideal of "sharing of meaning" in the interaction and transaction between the communicators and producers of mass media messages on the one hand, and the receivers and audience on the other hand.

It involves courage in terms of challenging the traditional commercial culture of many media messages, focusing on media texts with quality content. It can be summarized as a life-skill and form of self-control to use the media wisely, resulting in empowered citizenship and democracy. It will also demand some measures of courage, in the sense that the communal and societal good — not only that of the individual's — will need to be defended. The consumerism nature of modern society, where mass culture rules, may be affected positively in the process.

It can lastly also be described as a form of extended literacy and higher-level thinking, in particular about the values propagated by the mass media. The ideal is to empower all citizens and people, because the quality of the mass media's products can improve in return when audiences "demand" and can digest refined quality programmes. Although communication and mass communication scholars, specializing in the media may be initially feature strongly in the learning process, the progress will spiral

upwards as more people who are becoming media literate, can literally "teach" other people close to them.

While the establishment and integration of media literacy in schools and tertiary institutions has been a slow and difficult process in the developed countries which have already integrated it as a separate curriculum, the unique situation in South Africa may hamper the dissemination of the media literacy notion. A total of seventeen potential obstacles have been identified, which is not to say that these are the only potential problems in the propagation of the media literacy concept. Any sensitive teacher will, however, be able to transpose these obstacles to the teaching of media literacy, since most educators in the current South Africa time-frame have already made many paradigm shifts in terms of the above-mentioned obstacles.

A brief section on possible critical-thinking methods has been included as potential approaches, which can be incorporated into the two-part model for media literacy education. Ideally, media literacy should be a community and society movement, but in the face of the relative unfamiliarity of South African people and teachers specifically, the most promising way forward would be to start at tertiary level in order to produce more professional and media literate workers for the mass media industry.

The proposed model for media literacy education on tertiary level in South Africa has been separated into a structural part, focusing on the structure and components thereof, and a functional or process model with emphasis on the system in terms of energy and its direction, the reactions between the different "components" or phases and the effects on one another. A media literacy assessor/facilitator may use this model in order to organize the unspecific and abstract phenomenon of media literacy in order to obtain a general picture of the range of different situations and contexts. This model briefly explains the key moments and contents of media literacy education. What is important to remember is that the cognitive, affective, psycho-motor and conative aspects cannot be separated, as they are integrated. The process of media literacy education is complex and occurs holistically on different levels, in increments and represents a form of life-long learning as a learner progresses from one level to another.

Chapter 6

Critical perspective and conclusions

In this chapter the following aspects will be addressed:

- Relevancy of the identified research problem
- Researchability of the research problem
- Revisiting the qualitative research paradigm used in the study
- Initial assumptions of the study revisited
- A summary of the outcomes of the study
- Problems encountered during the research and model development
- The way ahead: a long-term vision for media literacy teaching in South Africa
- Recommendations for further research
- Final remarks

To look is one thing.
To see what you look at, is another.
To understand what you see is a third.
To learn from what you understand
is still something else.
To act on what you learn, is all that matters.
(Taoist saying)

6.1 Introduction

In this last chapter of the thesis, the following aspects will be discussed as a means of evaluating the research and summarizing the outcomes. The relevancy and researchability of the identified research problems will be briefly addressed in retrospect, in order to determine whether the set goal and objectives (as explained in Chapter 1.2 and 1.3) were accomplished. Singular references to problems encountered during the research will appear. The ideal of media literacy is that it will be established without delay in the South African context, and thus a future perspective and vision for the teaching of this subject is proposed. Before the final remarks, concise recommendations for future research will also be proposed. This chapter therefore aims to critically analyze the thesis in a retrospect manner.

6.2 Relevancy of the identified research problem

In the introductory chapter of this thesis, the background of the ever-growing and increasingly specialized mass media, with its multitude of messages and texts, served as the impetus for media literacy education in South Africa. Traditional and classical communication studies progressed into mass communication studies and research, which again evolved into specified mass media, audience and effect studies. As the mass media kept splintering, vying for the attention and buying-power of niche markets, converging over traditional borders, and run by international and global conglomerates, related study areas, in turn, also kept multiplying.

The more scholars, however, became concerned about the effects and implication of this mass and popular cultural industry, the faster the almost magical hold of the mass media over audiences expanded. Audiences cannot hope to keep up to speed about this massive sector of commerce, without which many people clearly do not want to live without — and with all this knowledge and exposure come overload and even

more ignorance about the exploding industry of the mass media. This compelled academics to increasingly research younger and intensely focused "new" subjects of study. The youngest disciplines resulting from these paradigms are subjects entitled media studies, encompassing aspects such as media knowledge, media in education, teaching through media, teaching about media, cultural studies, the realm of popular culture and brands, audience studies, effect studies, and specific concerns such as violence, gender stereotyping and news values.

Controversy and debate still exist about the perspective of the media's presence and role in people's lives and society, particularly the prominent position it holds in many children's and adolescents' individual thinking, cultural views and social relationships. Media literacy supporters accede that no-one can or should actually be protected from the alleged "evil" media. Media literacy educators should therefore be cautious of focusing only on the pathologies and effects allegedly caused by the media. The option of abolishment and censorship tends to be unrealistic and unnecessary. This will lead critics to say that media literacy is elitist and exclusive. Many media literacy scholars conduct lengthy discourses on issues about the inclusion of production of media messages by learners. In South Africa, this might be one of the obstacles to media literacy implementation, in view of the economical and infra-structural results of transformation in the educational sphere (see 5.7.1 – 5.7.19).

In view of this widespread-concern about the extended exposure of people to the mass media, particularly young children and adolescents, media literacy represents an extended definition of conventional or standard literacy. Literature is rife with statements about fundamental research and realizations that, in the developed world characterized by information commodities, most people get their information from the mass media and not only from books as traditional communication channels. Should the popularity and astounding growth of the Internet be added to this perception, the assertions which claim that many countries have become "mediacracies", ruled by those who know how to manipulate symbols, information and the media" (Walcott 1992:6) can be contextualized. (People such as Steyer (2002; see 3.2.4) and Considine (1995) are particularly concerned by the facts that the mass media act as "the other parent" and "surrogate teachers beyond the classroom".)

As a consequence of the growing concern in First World countries (particularly England and Canada), media literacy specialists, activists and advocates made their appearances, and urged educational systems to incorporate an independent and self-sufficient subject — pertaining to the mass media — into schools. In addition, the growth of the popular culture industry as conveyed by the mass media into homes everywhere in the world, became too aggressive to be ignored any longer. In addition, social and human science scholars in other disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, criminology and the languages, implicated the mass media in the perceived and alleged deterioration of society on various levels.

As a result, learning contents about the mass media made its first appearance in language, religious, social and cultural study subjects in schools, but quite often this referred to a use of the mass media in order to facilitate learning about the primary subject, and not about the mass media itself. Another much-debated matter refers to the aspect of the inclusion of a political agenda in the matter of media literacy teaching. Some scholars advocate the belief that media literacy is an excellent manner to advance critical citizen responsibilities, a less consumer-driven and materialistic society, individualism in the face of pervading mass culture, and democratic goals. The primary aspects of critical thinking and arguing skill development seems already like a high and sufficient goal in itself to this author.

This brought the matter to the South African status quo of the subject. Aside from one conference on Media Studies, focusing on aspects of media literacy and held in 1991 in Durban, triggering a few articles from mass communication scholars, very little happened in South Africa. The country has had to work through various political upheavals and dramatic changes, such as the first democratic election in 1994, during which the media (and in particular the news media) also became liberated, maybe for the first time in the history of the country.

In a specific sense, it additionally seems that South Africa is still populated with a naïve and young media audience and consumer population, in view of the fact that television only arrived, at the insistence of the so-called Apartheid regime, in the late 1970s, while the remainder of the media found themselves under strict censorship and

governmental control. Since then, however, media consumption figures have increased to be almost on par with that of developed countries (see Chapter 3.6), while the average South African, nonetheless, is daily exposed to massive doses of Western media content, specifically in terms of globalization trends. South Africa has spare traces of cultural studies in schools and tertiary institutions, and whatever made its appearance, was also under strict prescriptions from governmental education. In the meanwhile, the subject of media literacy slowly but certainly made progress in other countries, along with the prolific growth of the media itself.

During the first research for this study into the realm of media literacy, it became clear that South Africa, being a developing country on a Third World continent, has done marginal research and studies on this vital life-skill. While it is now a fully incorporated subject in most of the countries mentioned earlier, mere strands of media content seems to be used in other fields of study in schools. Repeated searches, various interviews and many queries yielded virtually no literature pertaining to media literacy itself in the South African realm (see Chapter 3). In the international context, on the other hand, many and fierce debates and arguments about the form of media literacy education, associated with literally dozens of pedagogical approaches and techniques were encountered. The immediate impression of media literacy, however, was while the eventual outcome, both on individual and collective levels, is an admirable goal, it is still fractured and unclear on many levels, with scholars from various disciplines fighting on the borders of the zone.

Against this background, media literacy — aimed at empowering ordinary people as media users by creating critical awareness when it comes to understanding the role that the media play in their lives, the decoding and evaluation of media messages and the popular context in which such messages are presented — has become imperative in South Africa. Therefore, the conclusion is made that the research problem identified in this study is indeed relevant and researchable. The use of a model to guide the process and content of media literacy teaching on *a tertiary level* in South Africa was done due to practical considerations. It is argued that the empowerment of university students with various academic backgrounds (social work, theology, education,

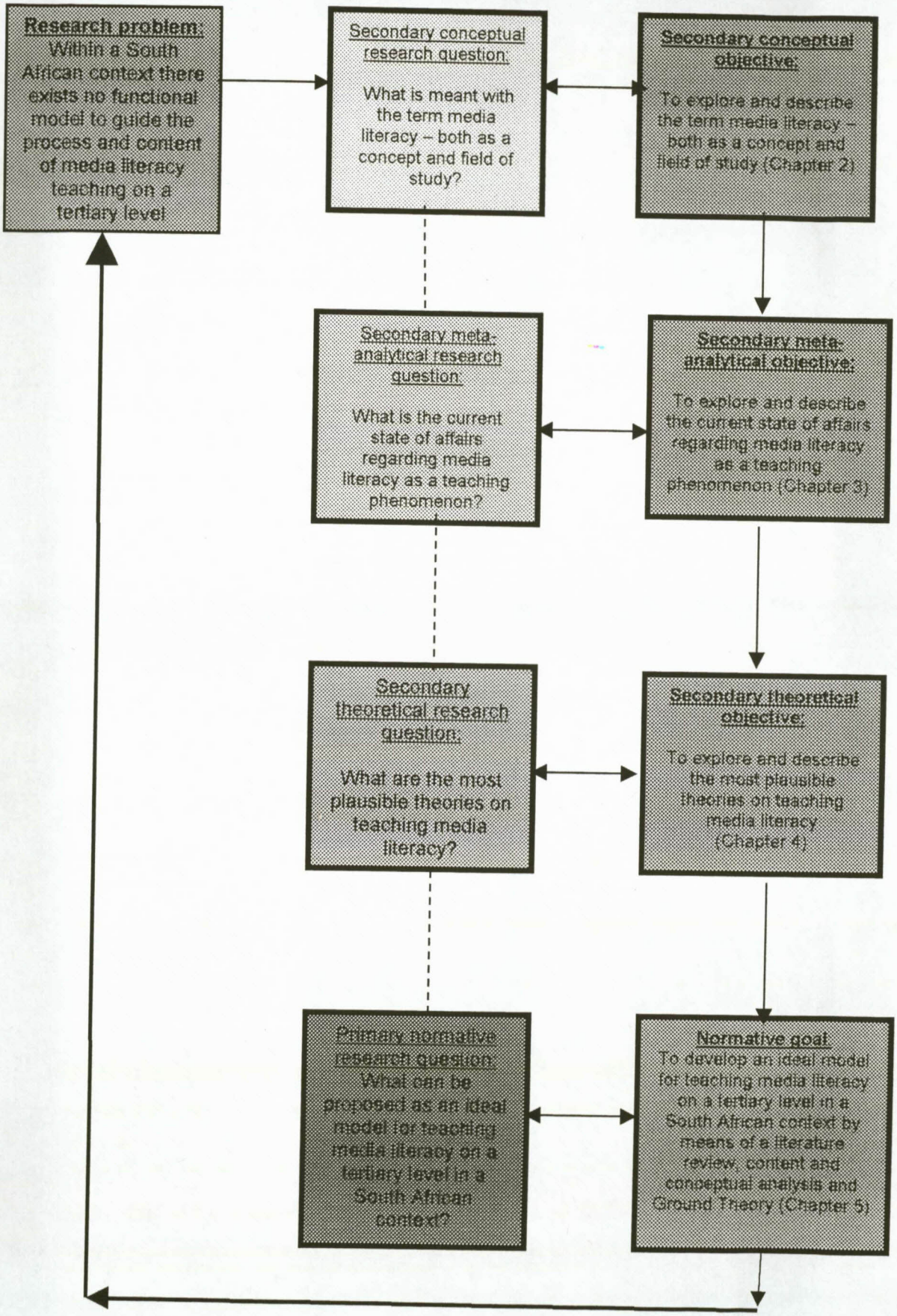
psychology etc) is the best starting point in developing a new generation of potential media literacy teaching facilitators, whose input in this regard could eventually filter through to other relevant societal structures and levels.

6.3 Researchability of the stated research problem

Given the stated research problem, the challenge in this study was to devise a research approach that could adequately address this problem and provide both a practical and usable solution.

In this explorative, descriptive, non-empirical and qualitative study, three secondary research questions (directly linked to the three secondary objectives of the study) and one primary research question (directly linked to the goal of the study) were formulated to direct the researcher's thinking and research towards a solution of the research problem. The following illustration gives an overview of how this approach contributed to the systematic nature and structure of the study:

Figure 6.1: **Overview of the systematic nature and structure of the research process**



It is argued that the research approach illustrated above not only provides the study with a simple, logical, systematic and integrated structure (to also enhance its internal validity), but that this approach was also adequate in addressing the stated research problem in order to provide a possible solution.

6.4 Revisiting the qualitative research paradigm used in the study

The qualitative research paradigm (characterized by the "non-statistical" and non-empirical analyses and observations of text or data) is often used when dealing with:

- exploration and description;
- the development of new theories;
- developing new and/or refining existing models;
- increasing the depth of understanding of a phenomenon; and
- pursuing new areas of interest.

All of these factors are of major importance in this study, which makes the qualitative paradigm relevant to this study.

In following the qualitative research paradigm a mixed research design was developed consisting of literature review, content analysis, conceptual analysis and Grounded Theory. It is argued that this four- dimensional and mixed research design is permissible in this study since Stead and Struwig (2001:11) state that qualitative research is often "multi-paradigmatic and multi-method in nature".

When it comes to enhancing the external validity or generalisation of the findings of the study (in particular the model) the technique of "thick description" or "rich narrative" as suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2001: 106) was used. This technique will hopefully provide the reader and other researchers with enough information to understand and evaluate the context, as well as the arguments, methodologies and process used to come to certain findings and the development of the model. However, it is acknowledged that following this technique might in places in this thesis have led to examples of over-explaining and even repetition.

It is also typical of qualitative research that different researchers may study the same phenomenon but come to different findings and conclusions. Therefore it is acknowledged that another researcher exploring media literacy teaching from his/her own unique framework of reference and perspective may come to the proposition of a different approach and the development of a different model. Although the researcher endeavored in this qualitative study to remain aware of the consequences of "acting as research instrument", it might have happened sporadically places that she came "too close to the study", which could have resulted in "a loss of objectivity and necessary professional detachment" as described by Wimmer and Dominick (2001: 44, 85).

It is likewise acknowledged that text formulation in certain instances in the thesis may tend to be less formal when compared with more conventional approaches. This should be seen, however, against the background that it is often typical of qualitative studies that the findings are communicated by means of *narratives, individual quotes, a personal voice and a literary style (*Leedy & Ormrod 2001: 102*;* Struwig & Stead 2001: 17).

Despite potential shortcomings in the researcher's implementation of the qualitative research paradigm, it is argued that this research approach was the most suitable for attempting a study of this nature and in addressing the stated research problem, research questions, goal and objectives of this study.

6.5 Initial assumptions of the study reconsidered

It was found in this study (as assumed in Chapter 1.9), that the media literacy teaching process is somewhat lawful and predictable, and therefore open to scientific research. As indicated in Chapter 1 (see 1.9; see also Mouton 2001), the following assumptions proved to be relatively accurate:

- Media literacy as a field of study is primarily aimed at empowering ordinary people as media users by creating critical awareness when it specifically comes to understanding the role that the media play in their lives; the

decoding, interpretation and evaluation of media messages; and the popular culture contexts in which such messages are presented.

- Media literacy as a field of study is and will always be closely related to media studies as an academic discipline, since the specific analytical skills and knowledge content operationalized in media literacy stems from media studies. What became quite clear, is that media literacy cannot be taught without an emphasis on and inclusion of the popular media and its content, particularly at tertiary levels.
- Media literacy as a distinctive learning area in the form of a subject, module or degree program, is virtually non-existent or either enjoys a very low profile in South Africa.
- Due to inevitable similarities between the mass media context of South Africa and that of First World countries when it comes to aspects like the role, functions, operational dynamics, effects, receiver experience, etc. There is an extensive use of overseas media content from First World countries, and therefore the literature and experiences related to media literacy in First World countries are quite relevant to a South African context.

6.6 A summary of the outcomes of the study

6.6.1 Exploring and describing the term media literacy, both as a concept and field of study

The set conceptual research question (as in Chapter 1.4) was examined in Chapter 2, focusing on the more abstract reasons and justifications for media literacy, the origins and historical development and the aims of the process. In order for better understanding of this young and abstract field of study, specific media literacy leaders and organizations were referred to, from whose contributions it became clear that the original pleas for media literacy sprung from various societal leaders such as educators, media professionals, church leaders and even politicians. The fragmented and ambiguous nature of the current body of knowledge in terms of definitions and descriptions was evident of confusion about the media literacy phenomenon and concept. For this reason, media literacy was juxtaposed next to other disciplines of standard or conventional literacy, communication literacy, information competence and

literacy, and visual literacy. The various fields of study, from which media studies and media literacy seemingly developed, were also studied in order to delineate the media literacy field.

6.6.2 Exploring and describing the current state of affairs regarding media literacy as a teaching phenomenon

As stated in Chapter 3, the meta-analytical research question referred to the current state of affairs of the mass media, which can be seen as the originating context of media literacy, but which also constitutes the context against which media literacy should be taught. Here the larger disciplines of communication and mass communication as the correct context for media literacy were examined. Mass communication is, as with the original definition of communication, aiming to share meaning — or should at the very least strive to do so. The context of mass communication, however, differs in many respects from interpersonal communication in the sense that the communication is mediated, that the audience is large, heterogeneous and distant from the communicator, that they have various needs on different levels, as well as different levels of development which they can employ for the decoding and analysis of the media messages they receive.

The transactional perspective of communication sees the receiver — the audience or individual consumers of the mass media products — as an equal partaker in the process, who should play an active role in the application of meaning to the message. While the professional mass communicator and producer often prevails over highly-developed knowledge and skills to construct the messages intended for the audiences, these receivers very seldom have the same expertise to contextualize the messages they receive via the media. The ideal would be to empower the individual consumer and mass audiences with vital knowledge and skills to interact with the communicator, and to become able to interpret these messages against the background of specific knowledge contents about the mass media at large, and the nature of mass communication.

The analysis of the current state of affairs also focused on specific accusations and allegations against the mass media throughout the development of the mass media

history, such as violence, stereotyping, emphasis on beauty and weight, sexism and racism, swearing and the use of profanities. These issues were included for two-fold reasons: to summarize many of the concrete arguments surrounding the mass media content and which can be seen as originating causes calling for the need for media literacy, and to illustrate how the mass media's products — soaps, music, dramas, news, advertisements and texts — can be applied as practical points of media education, although these aspects may be categorized under the heading of media analysis.

6.6.3 An exploration of the most plausible theories on the teaching of media literacy

In view of the absence of media literacy as an independent curriculum in South Africa, the fourth chapter was devoted to the answering of the theoretical research question: what can be seen as the ideal method or approach to the teaching of media literacy? The fact that so many First World countries have already implemented media literacy as an independent curriculum in tertiary education as well as schools, there are various approaches and techniques suggested for the optimal teaching of media literacy. Only one existing and literal model could be found for the teaching of media literacy, namely TAP (text, audience and production triangle of Eddie Dick from the Scottish Film Council). A total of twenty-two various approaches were evaluated, and most of these techniques were "tested" during two years of media literacy teaching for media students at the University of the Free State, where the subject forms part of a degree in Media Studies.

An evaluation of all these suggested methods and techniques of teaching revealed that the aspect of *critical thinking* is central to the teaching of media literacy. Critical thinking refers to the incessant asking of questions related to all aspects of the text or message under focus. Many of these approaches, in spite of the definitions which highlight the importance of knowledge contents about the nature, functions and ideology of the mass media, rather focus on the analysis of media texts and messages. It is uncertain whether learners who are subjected to these methods of teaching have already acquired a fundamental knowledge about mass communication

and the mass media at large. The fact, however, remains that there are possibly as many methods for the teaching of media literacy as there are individual teachers and media messages that could be used. The role of the media literacy teacher can never be underestimated — it should be a person with a fundamental knowledge about communication and the mass media who can make use of the many media examples and popular culture of which young learners are fond of, and who has the ability to pique curiosity in the learner by means of well-phrased questions.

The media literacy teacher should be open to as many perspectives on media messages as there are learners, and never judge a remark or learner as inadequate or wrong. Learners must be encouraged at all times to venture their individual and even highly-personal opinions on the mass media and messages, without fear of ridicule. Such an educator should produce maximum empowerment on the part of the learners. The South African teacher stands before a major challenge however: he or she needs to be sensitive to classes with a combination and array of learners from different cultures, languages, racial, ages, ethnic and gender groups, which may complicate the finding of suitable and equally popular media products. The media literacy educator lastly always has to be on guard to keep classes from going into political and cultural discourses, which could happen where learners have different view-points on issues such as feminism and submission of women.

6.6.4 A proposed ideal model for teaching media literacy on a tertiary level in South Africa

The pedagogical emphasis of the role of the educators in the process of media literacy education is crucial, as learning institutions should be assisted — even convinced and persuaded — to realize that they cannot ignore or condemn the media by a forced diet of high literary culture, and that the popular media and its content should rather be approached seriously and systematically in the classroom if learners are to be equipped with vital life-skills to negotiate the modern media environment, from which no person can escape. Many educators indeed do have the basic skills to engage and develop the imaginations and creativity of students, although most teachers may need additional and specific training to decode and analyze the mass media as channels of popular culture. The added benefit will be the development of a critical-thinking youth

and upcoming generation, which are empowered to navigate the intricate media landscape.

Any lecturer who has already obtained a fundamental framework of communication and the mass media should be able to apply the phases in the proposed model in this study, even by using simple media messages and formats (e.g. a television advertisement) in a most fundamental and basic manner. With the facilitation of this model, a receptive foundation should be instilled in learners to prepare them for the relatively unfamiliar phenomenon, concept and process of media literacy and media "decoding". (An excellent example for media literacy teaching purposes, is the recent advertisement for *Lay's* chips, in which former Springbok rugby captain, Francois Pienaar, is portrayed as a vindictive father who deliberately sabotages his son's birthday party in order to get hold of the snacks — not being a Nice Guy anymore. Various media literacy learners in this researcher's class voiced mild shock and disapproval of this advertisement.)

The *functioning* of the media literacy process is also clear in the model, as well as the forces of the different stages and knowledge contents on one another. What is vital in this regard, is the realization that media literacy cannot be educated and taught without the insights of an assessor focusing on critical thinking skills, and without general knowledge about and examples from the mass media itself. It thus implies that the educator/lecturer should be intensely engaged in the various contemporary mass media itself, even if only by means of a lively interest therein and a continuous surveillance thereof.

The educator/facilitator should always keep in mind that media literacy is a prime example of life-long learning, occurring by increments on a continuum of learning, and that there is not pressure to attain "perfect" and complete media literacy. The implications in terms of teacher professional expertise and life-long learning with ever-increasing media literacy skills and knowledge are apparent. The developmental phases of the proposed model, which was the primary goal in the study, were discussed in full in Chapter 5.

A section on practical guidelines to be implemented and followed during implementation of the model in a tertiary teaching context, gained from personal teaching experience on this difficult and complex subject, is included in a section at the end of the model, together with ideas about the ideal media literacy teacher or facilitator and the stimulation of critical thinking, which should also be of assistance to the prospective educator or teacher. (Critical thinking can be explored optimally, since this pedagogy forms the essence of media literacy. It is merely critical thinking, applied to the mass media and its contents.)

6.6.4.1 Phases in the development of the proposed model

Traditional definitions of media literacy education include two vital components, to wit mass communication and pedagogy. Media education aims to equip people — and in the case of this thesis, primarily tertiary learners — with knowledge about *communication and the mass media, as well as these media's nature, characteristics and functions* — by means of *pedagogical methods*. The aim is to address "uncritical thinking" and passivity about the reception of messages received by consumers via any of the mass media. One of the ideals is indeed to "bring up" and raise citizens who have certain critical thinking skills so evaluate media messages, but also the willingness to understand more about the messages in the mass media as well as the nature of the latter.

The principles of Grounded Theory were applied for the development of a South African model for media literacy. After content analysis of a collection of fifty-odd different statements and descriptions of media literacy conceptualized by various academical leaders and organizations in the field of study, and originating in several of the earlier-mentioned countries.

These emerging constructs, which could form integral parts of a theory and model for media literacy education in South Africa, were classified under the following headings:

- cognitive (knowledge) contents;
- affective components;
- psycho-motor and behavioural skills;
- conative prerequisites;
- the techniques of learning and approaches to teaching;
- who should be the potential teacher/s of media literacy;
- who should be the potential learner/s of media literacy;
- the focus of the teaching content; and
- eventual outcomes of media literacy education.

Models have specific functions, e.g. an organizing function, provision of a general picture of a range of different particular circumstances, an explanatory and heuristic function, thus providing the basis for assigning probabilities to various outcomes. The presentation of a concept and particularly a process such as teaching can be fittingly translated into models, where the latter offers a simplified representation of a relatively complicated system and process such as media literacy teaching. It is obviously difficult to "build" a concrete and workable model which can explain processes and events in the social and human sciences, but relative newcomers to the phenomenon should also be able to comprehend the concept and process of media literacy in a less time-consuming and complicated manner rather than trying to digesting all the related and disparate literature.

The method of constant comparison was applied to the development of the proposed model for media literacy in this study, being the primary goal and research question. Constant comparison goes through four phases or procedures to the eventual presentation of the phenomenon under focus: open coding, axial coding and selective coding, ending with the presentation of the model itself. The model in this study consists of two parts, constituting a model focusing on the content and which aims to describe the structure and components of media literacy, and a *functional* model, describing the system of media literacy in terms of energy, forces and its direction in the teaching process.

The model for the process of media literacy teaching consequently includes the following aspects:

- The reasons for the need of media literacy education;
- The envisioned learner, who will be a tertiary learner in this specific model, although there are many other potential learners of media literacy;
- The envisioned educator, who ideally will be a qualified scholar in communication, mass communication and the mass media, and even information science;
- The approaches and techniques whereby the process of media literacy can be initiated in terms of —
    - Cognitive contents and aims;
    - Affective content and aims;
    - Psycho-motor skills and aims; and
    - Conative requirements which may be conditions for the fulfillment of media literacy on the first and any of the following levels.

6.6.4.2 Literal application of the model to the teaching of media literacy

The last four components mentioned above should be taught in an integrated manner and cannot be separated from one another, as many of these skills and knowledge contents, resulting in certain outcomes, overlap. The content part of the model for media literacy education on a tertiary level in South Africa focuses on the potential and possible contents, which can be included in the teaching of a media literacy curriculum. The education should ideally commence with a broad discussion and study of the communication discipline, progressing to outcomes focusing on mass communication and the mass media, specifically the nature, functions and characteristics of these cultural "agents", and communicators of information, education and entertainment, amongst others.

In the South African context, the media literacy educator should be selective about the media messages and texts chosen for teaching, as learners may present different ethnical, cultural, language and gender groupings. Issues, which can be discussed in

class context, could include issues such as media hegemony, violence, globalization, stereotyping, and sexism amongst many others. This should preferably be accompanied by independent research on the part of the learners into media content of their own choosing.

The concept of media literacy can only now be addressed, as the background and context has been set in terms of communication and media effect studies. There are many approaches to the teaching of media literacy, of which critical thinking and class dialogue are in almost every case important components. The potential results and effects of the mass media can also be addressed. The model supplies examples of teaching methods and approaches, after which the initial foundation for media literacy should have been attained, only to progress to a more advanced level.

To commence with media literacy teaching, teachers need a critical framework to orientate themselves. The media are a broad, amorphous field, extending not just from traditional media such as newspapers and magazines to television and film, but also now encompassing many areas of popular culture such as fashion, toys and dolls, the nature of celebrity, etc. Anyone attempting to make sense of this area needs a clear conceptual framework that will allow for discussion of a variety of complex and interrelated factors. A teacher has to be ready to seize any (in Barry Duncan's words) "any teachable moment," and a set framework can then lead to rational, critical discourse about any text. The same critical concepts have to be applied to a wide variety of different materials as they appear in the curriculum. It is crucial to remember that media literacy seldom occurs in terms of specific layers, but rather in increments, moving back and forth between knowledge contents, skills and comprehension of media ideology and functions, thus becoming a product of life-long learning and acquisition of growing critical thinking skills and dialectic skills.

6.6.4.3 Application of the proposed model against the background of the transactional perspective of communication

It has been mentioned that the history of audience involvement with the media has developed according to specific phases (see 2.3.1 and 2.3.2). Where communication

was initially viewed by scholars such as Shannon and Maclean as a linear and one-dimensional process, ensuing communication researchers followed the line of thinking of respected media studies scholar Gerbner, who ascribed a transactional requirement to the communication event, and so doing away with the traditional vision of the audience as a passive and helpless victim who are mindlessly subjected to the effects of the mass media.

The transactional communication model and perspective empowers receivers (the audience and media consumers) by ascribing a specific function of feedback to them, which can in turn influence the mass communicator and producers of mass messages. Because of manifold reasons, such as the affective, psychological and emotional attachment that receivers develop with their medium of choice, mass communicators increasingly became adept in the languages of persuasion and propaganda which they apply deliberately to attain their purposes of profit and consumption figures.

Media literacy fits into this developmental phase, where the audience is empowered to become an equal partaker in the process of communication by means of specific cognitive content and psycho-motor skills. These knowledge contents and skills can empower audiences and receivers of mass media messages to willingly become more discerning media consumers, thus also enhancing their enjoyment of the products of the mass media. Media literacy can currently be viewed as the latest chapter in mass media and audience studies, being an extended and amplified version of traditional literacy, which is repeatedly emphasized as insufficient in the Age of Information in literature. The traditional mass media have been surpassed by many new and breathtaking technological developments, demanding increased skills and knowledge on the part of the receiver to interact with the mass media's messages, and to protect him- or herself against messages containing propaganda and manipulation.

6.7 Problems encountered during the research and model development

Dilemmas which presented itself during the course of the research and literature survey as well as the model developing stage, can be briefly mentioned: the existing of

body of knowledge, as repeatedly stated, is very fragmented, and originated from many different scholars, role-players and organizations involved in the propagation of media literacy education. Certain schools of thought would focus on the "new media" as the most urgent in terms of information and knowledge literacy, while other schools emphasize aspects of media institutions: nature, functions and ideology for example. In addition, a fairly prominent profile of "borrowing" and plagiarism was encountered: for example, the initial eight building-blocks of media literacy, formulated by esteemed academic Reneé Hobbs, will later be encountered as the *Center for Media Literacy's* tempered-down variation of five building-blocks or core principles.

The fragmented and ambiguous current field of study and literature pertaining to media literacy, while mystifying, can probably be explained as a result of several reasons. Firstly, media literacy as a field of study is a very young and contemporary field with its seeds only planted in the 1970s when the first concerns and worries about the observed effects and implications of the mass media dawned on some of the stake-holders. These included researchers in the communication and information worlds, educators, the media people themselves, parents, psychologists, sociologists, linguists and even anthropologists. One can justifiably ask whether the person in question, however, was now talking about teaching how to use media, teaching how to make media, teaching about media's nature, functions and characteristics, teaching how to interpret media, or teaching about understanding media affects.

Secondly, the mass media being the objects of study in media literacy, have grown at an almost incomprehensible speed, making it very hard for a new discipline dealing exclusively with the mass media effects to get of the ground. No sooner has a plan been devised to equip people with knowledge about one medium, before the next technological wonder appears on the scene. New genres have also exploded on a continuous base: no sooner did one so-called reality show come and go, or the next one dawned on the media public. Producers of advertisements increasingly make use of more sophisticated techniques and approaches. The various media merge and become more diverse, and niche or specialist audiences are becoming smaller in view of the mass of media formats and messages available to discerning consumers.

Thirdly, there are many and various perspectives and angles from which to teach media literacy. Whereas one group would focus specifically on knowledge contents about the mass media, whilst another teacher may make ample use of mass media equipment (such as a VCR or magazines or television advertisements) in class, thus familiarizing learners by experiential learning, and thirdly another educational approach could focus on production of media content.

Media literacy and media education are terms that have gone through many interpretations and potential applications since the inception of the terms. Different definitions, perspectives on and approaches to media literacy teaching resulted in shifting focuses, varying from emphasis on the analysis of mass media messages to the educational applications of modern information and communication technologies and pedagogical techniques. The different transformational phases and changing points of focus on this sub-discipline of media studies can be ascribed to different causes: the fact that media literacy and media education are newcomers to the mass communication disciplines; that the mass media are increasingly becoming more complex; that each medium has many different genres and formats and that receivers are becoming more skilled with the advent of each new medium and genre.

The additional advantage of the Internet and WorldWideWeb as an important telematic tool for media education contributed to the complex landscape of the discipline of media literacy. Lastly it may be that these complexities have caused educators and other stake-holders to keep a distance in view of uncertainty about what exactly the phenomenon involves. Tyner talks about the "Media Education Elephant" (1999), which is a big animal where each man can touch only one part, and where all these parts must be put together in order to find out what an elephant is like.

A percentage of media literacy scholars would defend the acquisition of skills as highly critical to the development of media literacy, whilst many others highlight the functions of critical thinking as first priority. Not only does media literacy have an educational importance, but seems to advocate a potential solution to societal symptoms such as mass culture, loss of creativity and individuality, dwindling originality, conformism and consumerism. Some media literacy scholars even label the process as the

development of civic courage and civic responsibility, carrying philosophical echoes of Plato and Socrates who urged people to exercise their (critical) thinking capabilities and not only their needs for recognition, reputation and money. Even the term media literacy was and is also in contention — international media educators have used terms such as media education (thought to be teaching *about* media) and media studies (teaching the *making* of media) to describe what they were doing. The ideal curriculum is thought to integrate the two practices".

Media literacy is *multi-faceted and multi-dimensional*, and different advocates focus on different outcomes: *protectionism, technology education, media arts education, democratic education, semiology, skills development for analysis, skills for producing quality messages, fundamental knowledge about communication, critical thinking amongst others.* There are too many mass media and too many messages, very often of a poor quality, which flows to uncritical consumers. Projections are that the current total amount of available information will represent only 10% of all information and communication messages in 2030 (Rapport April 2002). People need to be taught how to deal with all these messages in a cautionary way.

Different esteemed scholars from distinct human and social science disciplines also contributed different perspectives of what media literacy constitutes in terms of the mass media which should be implicated in the sociological, philosophical, psychological and cultural dimensions of media literacy. Messaris (1994) and Meyrowitz (1998), amongst others, put emphasis on visual literacy in view of the popularity of these media, whilst other authors such as Downs (2000) and Silverblatt (1995; 1999; 2002) focus more on the acquisition of media literacy skills with specific reference to the computer technology media and "hypermedia". In addition to these media literacy scholars, philosophers such as Baudrillard (1960s to 1970s) and Habermas (1970s), also contributed to the media literacy body of knowledge in terms of their explicit critique of the effects of the mass media on the public sphere, where media literacy can assist to empower people with skills to participate in the public debate and so help to shape participatory democracy. Postman, amongst various others, fiercely commented on modern man's interaction with television where they "amuse themselves to death". Media literacy can therefore be viewed as a **type of**

moral philosophy and the building of character, which can become effective in terms of society-building and the development of democracy.

The vision of media literacy, being an extended form of traditional literacy or "part of a general literacy" (Bazalgette 1991), became a potential solution to the ever-present and many-layered contents and products of the mass media, which have been accused of many wrongs since the times of Plato and Aristotle. Communication and media scholars realized that the media cannot be eliminated from society, especially since these institutions also satisfy and fulfill many needs of society, such as information, surveillance, commentary and interpretation, entertainment and pleasure and cultural reinforcement. It is unrealistic to want to abolish all carriers and channels of "dangerous and harmful" content, as the mass media have been accused of, from society, as it never empowers individuals to become independent selectors who critically think about their own lives against the larger backgrounds of the communities and societies they form part of. Seen against the background of constitutional rights which guarantee the right to choose what is suitable to the individual, including communication and information, and freedom of expression, the ideal of a democracy with mature and empowered citizens will never be achieved.

Compared to the ideal of communication which embodies complete sharing of meaning between the participants, this view of the mass media as omnipotent and powerful determining agents of values in society, is also not sustainable. In order to integrate the interaction of all partakers in the mass communication process, media literate individuals can certainly advance this ideal. The heart of the media literacy phenomenon is to educate people to not accept all media messages unthinkingly and blindly, but rather in an active manner which can actually enhance the enjoyment of quality media messages, as media literate person's taste will evolve, and result in a demand for better content which can have a positive effect on the media institutions perspective of media audiences.

The important aspect of media literacy education seem to hinge on student-centered and open-ended learning approaches, which is excellently suited for current South African approaches to outcome-based education. Learners will develop critical

thinking skills, autonomous thinking, empowered opinions and self-confidence, increased debating and arguing skills and augmented dialogue and interpersonal skills — all aspects which can contribute to the development of the democracy.

What this thesis, together with all other educators of media literacy (principally those situated in other countries who are already firmly entrenched in media literacy programs), therefore will endeavour to propose, is that the media consumer must become media literate, and know how and when to use the contents of the mass media to their advantage and benefit. This nation's youth and children, who are the leaders and parents of tomorrow, are currently and increasingly raised on staple diets of low-taste media content and violence. The debate centers on how they can be taught how to digest these masses of media messages; learn what and how to discard and NOT to believe, and what to enjoy and use and believe. In other words, they need to learn how to balance their media-diets and message-intake. *The research in this thesis was aimed at developing a critically important "life-skill" which can be applied through all the stages of life.* Discernment is indeed a life-skill, which can only benefit the bearer thereof. The media literate learner is being prepared for society in which he or she will increasingly be subjected to masses of mediated information.

As the mass media reinvent itself at a dazzling speed, we too pass through certain "media stages" or 'media phases' when we develop from children to working adults to aged generations. Sheehy (1976, 1994), author of several best-selling books on the passages of life, said that "[w]e must be willing to change chairs if we want to grow. There is no one right chair. What is right at one stage may be restricting at another or too soft".

This study aimed to examine the young subject of media literacy on a broader level. It was an effort to integrate and reconcile all the different aspects and facets of media literacy as it occurs in literature [both text-books and Internet material] in more general terms, seeing it from a holistic perspective in order to clarify the subject as such rather than perfecting a method of implementation and curriculum content in schools. It has also been pointed out that media literacy occurs in increments along a continuum of growth. People are positioned along that continuum based on the cognitive,

emotional, aesthetic, moral skills and knowledge they possess, enabling or disabling them to gaining control over the communication and sharing-of-meaning process in a transactional context. Media literacy is an ever-growing and never-ending process of learning as the mass media continue along their breathtaking speed of development. There is no finishing line, and guide-posts at this stage in time is limited, particularly in the South African context, where marginal media literacy teaching has been implemented in learning institutions.

6.8 The way ahead: the long-term vision for media literacy teaching in South Africa

A vision for media literacy implemented by means of media education classes in tertiary institutions, might result in three desired outcomes:

- If a foundation for media literacy can be laid in schools and even pre-primary schools, the understanding and appropriate utilization of the mass media can only grow. Most certainly young children and adolescents have many conversations about favourite media programs and contents, since it mostly relates directly with peer groups' cultures. When they learn that mass "cloning" is not a condition for acceptance, this can certainly also stimulate critical thinking, creativity and improved individualism.
- More parent-teacher associations, churches, citizen groups and reading circles should be involved in the quest for media literacy, as all these stakeholders employ the mass media for information and educational purposes. It can result in improved message construction and production, so serving individual and community interests and needs. These organizations can regularly invite experts from the mass media institutions to deliver talks on the nature, aims and operational aspects of the media. Community media are certainly on the rise again in view of the Global Village and globalization, where research has confirmed that people are searching for "roots" again in terms of identity and cultural belonging.
- Media studies learners are the future professionals in terms of the mass media: journalists, text and copy writers, media planners, audience researchers, programme producers. When the first media literate-

generation can be streamlined into the media, the possibilities of wide-spread media literacy becomes more realistic, and should also reflect in improved quality media content. A body of knowledge can thus be established in terms of media literacy facilitators at tertiary level, which can be made available through the various print and broadcast media in that area. The media of communication should ideally increasingly serve to construct community, culture and society.

If media literacy is of any concern to South African stakeholders and mass media experts, the following factors will also need attention with regard to implementation throughout the country in the process of dissemination:

- In-service workshops to help inexperienced teachers and assessors learn methods and techniques to use the mass media and its contents in the classroom;
- Community-based groups, media art centers and citizen organizations who can equip parents and community leaders, if only by sensitizing them;
- Departments of Education must set funds aside for media resources and the training of teachers, even if they are requested by means of lobbying in Parliament;
- Government and its administrators must earmark money and time to help schools and teachers as well as parents with this crucial issue which can also affect the voters public and politics;
- Commercial organizations and businesses should ideally buy in and realize why media literacy and media education is important, as media literacy can also positively effect consumer behaviour and therefore the fiscal matters of the country eventually;
- Teachers must support one another, and should use forums, newsletters, community bulletin boards and list-servs to share good ideas and encourage one another (of which value this researcher can testify in view of the type of current research articles one receives every day from media literacy leaders internationally);
- Teacher-generated frameworks that is not limited and restricted by state-administrators will be the ideal;

- Student motivation and self-evaluation will be required of learners who have completed a fundamental course in media literacy (see the conative element of the model in 5.4.2);
- Community outreaches and school (summer) camps where young children and adolescents can learn in a playful way to negotiate the omni-present media environment will be ideal; and
- Democratic classrooms where students are given responsibility for their opinions and reciprocal respect should be fostered, even if their opinions are divergent and highly individualistic — while the most important condition, as earlier mentioned, will be a non-judgmental facilitator.

Previous studies on the implementation have shown that there are specific factors that appear to be crucial to the successful development of media education in any situation, but specifically educational contexts:

- As all other innovative and new programs, media literacy must be a grassroots movement and facilitators need to take a major initiative in lobbying for this.
- Educational authorities in any environment where the program is envisaged, must give support to the movement and program by mandating the teaching of media literacy and education within the curriculum, establishing guidelines and resource books, and by ascertaining that curricula are developed along certain standards and that materials and resources are available.
- Faculties of Education at colleges, technikons and universities must hire staff capable of training future facilitators in this area, with sufficient academic support from tertiary institutions in the writing of curricula and in sustained consultation.
- In-service training at school levels is to be integral parts of program implementation.
- Schools need consultants who have expertise in media literacy and who can take care of communication networking.
- Suitable textbooks and audio-visual material, which are relevant to the country and area, must become available.

- A support organization must be established for the purposes of workshops, conferences, dissemination of newsletters and the development of curriculum units. Such a professional organization must not be subject to teaching institutions only, in order to involve a good cross-section of other people than educators who are interested in media literacy and implementation thereof.
- Because media literacy education call on a diversity of skills and expertise, collaboration between role-players – teachers, parents, researchers and media professionals – are crucial.

Cooperative learning, class discussions, groupwork and dialogues between learners are seen as some of the best models for current times in order to overcome the very real problems of the modern society (Adams et al 1990: 27) and which can be excellently suited for media literacy teaching. Collaborative learning has the following benefits and results:

- Collaboration works best when students are given real problems to solve.
- A collaborative environment grows slowly nurtured by teachers who consider everyone a resource.
- Learning to think as a team that sinks or swims together can help many students learn more.
- A collaborative environment works best if it allows risks and mistakes.
- Collaborative learning allows practice in solving problems.
- Individuals learn best when they are held individually responsible for group subtasks.
- The less academically talented develop better learning attitudes when they work with successful students.
- Roles often change: learner becomes tutor and tutor becomes learner.

All the above aspects can be applied optimally within the surrounding context of the mass media and media content, which has no preference for consumers – as long as they consume. Media literacy and teaching lends itself so excellently to development of critical thinking and arguing skills, which should be the aim of all educational systems.

The development of a self-sufficient and contained discipline called media literacy will not be easy in view of the fact that today's blockbuster and award-winning series might be dated and "un-cool" in three months time, when a new series will be setting the trend. The arena of mass communication and the mass media is one of constant change. Furthermore, no place or person, except virtually isolated civilizations or tribes, is beyond the reach of the mass communication.

Media teaching and education must be beyond doubt one of the most challenging areas where absolute creativity and originality can be tolerated and absorbed. Research has shown during the last decade of the 20th century, popular culture in all its manifestation have real usefulness as a social and cultural resource to articulate differences, pleasure, identification and even resistance in the face of other dominant representations and cultural practices. It also seems clear that literacy from any perspective cannot be seen in isolation anymore as a mere skill of writing and reading.

6.9 Recommendations for further research

As knowledge of the media grows, it should be expected that awareness of one's own media use and habits would become more obvious. It could also prove that the more students are becoming media literate, the more accurately they will be able to report their media use and behaviour, whereas students with less media literacy education are presumably not indisputably equipped to determine and measure their own media consumption habits. The latter issue is one of the most significant methodological challenges in media effects researchers. More research is needed to understand more about the relationships between the acquisition of media literacy skills and media consumption behaviour. The current societal problems high on the agenda (e.g. as Aids, sexual promiscuity, abuse of alcohol and other substances, the growing incidences of anorexia and bulimia particularly under formerly-unaffected African teenage-girls) and the relationship with the mass media and its contents, are all issues which call for focused and immediate research, as other international studies into these subjects indicate.

With sparse incidences of media literacy education in South Africa, particularly where

the subject is offered as a stand-alone curriculum, further research about this issue in the local context is vital. Points to be addressed should include local studies on the consequences of media literacy teaching on the consumer patterns of audiences. Another aspect that deserves serious study is the effect of media literacy teaching on different cultural and language groupings in one class.

It would furthermore be valuable to determine which media formats and texts mostly stimulate the learners' interest and involvement. There certainly will be specific genres and texts which will not capture the attention of a tertiary media literacy class, while they will view other programs and texts as more challenging. In the absence of highly technological equipment and insufficient resources to establish such infrastructures in South Africa, the matter of resourceful and innovative media message production deserves further research. Whilst this thesis was mainly focused on the development of a model for tertiary education of media literacy, there remains much work to be done if the ideal of a media literate society is ever to realize. Research focusing on suitable points of departure for primary and secondary school levels is of importance.

Further research is also needed to determine what media genres are most and least challenging for students to analyze, as research on this issue may contribute to the design of more effective instructional material or the allocation of classroom time. If research could demonstrate and prove that other genres of media messages as advertising are more challenging and difficult for students to analyze, future curriculum planning can be facilitated.

Media educators should urge students to continuously "ask questions about what you watch, see and read". The process of continuous asking of questions about information programming has the capacity to disrupt the automatic and uncritical acceptance of factual information presented, and these results may be used to explore pedagogical approaches which aim to build awareness under learners about the levels of processing required for effective comprehension and critical analysis of news and informational programming (Hobbs and Frost 2001).

Only if society and its educators examine and analyze the positive and negative effects and implications that the mass media constitute in our daily lives, can we hope to

understand how the mass media that we have created, are changing us, the way we communicate, believe, work, play and interact and live. We have to know why we seek out certain media and genres and how our choices affect our lives and thinking and growing. If the media are influencing and effecting and transforming us, we have to find out how and why – and then it may not matter that these effects and implications are of a negative quality, because we have become empowered to recognize and reject it.

Obviously the human race cannot and do not want to live without the mass media. People also do not *need to live without them*, because they can certainly add to and improve life. But they can equally devaluate and weaken quality of life. They can equip us how to deal with life, or they can create problems just coping with the contents. They can increase freedom, enriching us, but the mass media can also restrict and debase us, restrict our thinking and feeling capacities turning us into technological slaves and clones, as happened with the followers of Hitler in Germany, committing a crime, without even knowing that they were doing it.

The mass audiences need to become empowered, and even more importantly, empower the future leaders and generations of tomorrow – today's learners at schools. All media consumers should become media-wise and in turn educate media students to be media-wise, exploiting the mass messages coming at us for the best they can give, and so ascertaining our media growth. In that way and that way alone, can the media become the wonderful tools they were meant to be, and not merely conditioning machines.

6.10 Final remarks

In view of the multi-cultural nature of virtually every society in the world caused by the communications revolution, an area of future media literacy research undoubtedly will involve cross-cultural aspects. With digital and satellite developments, nobody is out of reach and the choices available proliferate enormously. The implications and effects of these developments are less clear, and distinctions between so-called mass media and personal media may blur increasingly. What seems definite, is that the

traditional forms of literacy are no longer adequate to equip citizens with a functional form of literacy in terms of the mass media, the main carriers of messages, specifically in the cultural sense of the word, and that people need "extended skills and literacy" for these "extensions of man" (McLuhan 1964).

Achieving higher levels of media literacy is a life-long developmental process of building stronger and more elaborate knowledge structures by using a wide range of skills. An ever-growing range of media literacy should be seen as a journey to better perspectives from which to digest and enjoy the mass media. As there is no one single perspective, approach, method or route to media literacy, there obviously is also not one final point of destination. Media literacy is a continuous process with many variations from one person to the next, ranging with regard to awareness and control, and also necessity. It might be more critical for one person such as a media studies lecturer to become highly media literate, whilst another person may have a smaller need for media literacy. Media literacy in the end is a perspective that should be achieved by means of a growing process of awareness and control.

All of these aspects seem to highlight the purpose of media literacy as a type of "self-control" over interpretations of media and media's influence over us. Potter (2001: 9) asserts that "a key to media literacy is not to engage in the impossible quest for truthful or objective messages. They don't exist. Instead, we need to be aware of the interpretative process and to be vigilant in looking for patterns in interpretations within media messages. The process of media effects is subtle, gradual, and indirect – they [media messages] can become easily rooted in our minds without us being aware of it happening until it becomes difficult to purge. Such mindless exposure to the media is seen to encourage uncritical acceptance of media interpretations, so conscious and alert media exposure is necessary to recognize the full range of media effects and how they exercise their influence on us" (Potter 2001:9) and prevent unconscious media effects from controlling us. It is imperative that consumers are conscious of how media affects us. This self-control merely implies a measure of critical judgment and thinking applied on a continuous basis to the media that people consume.

With a media literate population, South Africans can think critically about the process of information in a thoughtful way: we can evaluate our personal values and judge

information without feeling threatened by it. We can make our own information and send it out into the world knowing that it is a mindful, wiser world. And best of all, nobody would no longer feel helpless or victimized by the vast legacy of the Age of Information.

From a communications perspective and the systems theory of communication, media literacy is vital to change the mainly one-way communication from the mass media to the consumers and audiences into a two-way, transactional and interactive process, including the consumer's and audience's feedback by means of discussion, consideration and active participation. Thus the audience members will be empowered to become a fully active and participating user rather than a passive abuser.

The reorientation mentioned above may also lead to a more relaxed, pragmatic and pluralistic view of the place of media and media literacy in the curriculum. Media education may find its best home and fullest growth inside a particular subject such as English, Literature or even Cultural or Social Studies, moving to a fully integrated and independent curriculum in its own right. It should be absorbed in an institutional framework in which students may address mass communication and the mass media as public property and cultural resource for everyone and all people. If the personal computer offers use "a second self", as suggested by proponents and researchers of computer-mediated communication, this can be even more true about the mass media in general. Mass communication represents a broad cultural forum, and in order to access and participate in that forum, members of society need critical skills of "meta-communication about the mass media" (Green in Jensen et al 1991:220).

Media literacy, so often lumped with knowledge of current events and how to use communications media (such as television, computers, newspapers), is much more than that: instead of passively consuming the messages that media channels attempt to deliver to al people, media literacy would make them think about what values and knowledge are being passed to them via these media messages. Hopefully South Africa should be on the way to some media education with a view to extensive media literacy in the society. The first priority in the process of media literacy would be for many people to recognize that their media diets are unbalanced and unhealthy and

that they themselves can be the only one to correct this by paying attention to deficits and mass consumption of wrong combinations.

As an area of general education throughout the school system, media offer certain intrinsic pleasures and uses from which all learners curiosity and critical sense and skills may develop. The core contents of media education should not only focus on newspapers, magazines, film, television, radio, and videos but also multi-data communication, music, popular culture extensions. It is however, still unclear exactly what the theoretical and practical components and contents in each phase and stage of school education should be.

In his contemporary book on media ethics, Kieran (1998) emphasizes the growing need for media education as he urged:

> As we enter the era of digital communication and the Internet, we face another expansion of the political media, as hundreds of new channels come on air or on-line with space to fill. In meeting that challenge we as citizens should be vigilant, and ensure that our journalists are vigilant on our behalf, maintaining their own ethical standards, those of the politicians on whom they report and the spin-doctors who seek to influence their coverage. We should encourage media education in schools and universities, so that the citizens of the twenty-first century learn the skills of critical reading and viewing as part of their preparation for civic responsibility. And if all of that is not enough, we will simply have to exercise our right not to play the game: to switch it off, withdraw our support, and call it to a halt.

The arguments and debates about the mass media and its content are, as mostly is the case with controversial issues, a two-edged sword. If the masses are too addicted to their media, choosing the low road of escapism and hypnotism, it might be a result of the fact that we have not and do not spend much time training people how to use the media and how to integrate it in a fulfilling and balanced life-plan with a balanced media diet. Certain societies may naturally be unwilling to include as part of basic education thinking about how one might lead one's life and the habits one needs to develop to pursue such lives. Excessive mass media exposure can be seen as a moral problem because of a larger cultural failing. It is not an ailment to be attributed to the medium as such, nor to its characteristic stylistic elaboration of the image. Neither the medium nor the image is inherently immoral or bad, but rather the mass communication scholars' failure to educate people about how to use it may be socially responsible.

The media themselves are neither saviors nor destroyers of society; it is those who gain access to and make skillful use of the mass media that determine both positive and negative media contributions. The media are indeed revolutionary instruments because they massage the very societies that give birth to them. Rather than raising alarmist concerns about the effects of popular culture in the mass media all the time, and possibly alienating the youth on the grounds of so-called "traditionalism", media literacy can be implemented to armour individuals against these contents, and collectively contribute to the cultivation of a thinking, questioning democracy.

The ultimate and final truth in terms of complete explanation and full understanding regarding the mass media and media literacy will always be an ideal and most probably never be reached. New theories and hypotheses always have to be put to the test, and very often many theories are forsaken for the lack of empirical support and research. Surviving hypotheses and theories may in the meantime be used to explain the world we live in, and to try and understand, to interpret and to improve specific phenomena at the individual and societal level, of which this thesis on the phenomenon of media literacy is a prime example.

Media literacy should never be equated with a feud against the media, creating a societal and moral panic particularly for parents who are raising children in today's society. It should rather be emphasized that it has been called the "perfect curriculum" and "a meta-curriculum" for learning, equipping learners to negotiate their media-rich environments and to become critical thinkers in the blossoming democracy of South Africa, which can prosper in the age of the media. In the last instance, the real value of media literacy may just be situated in the social justice it brings about in the long term, and the process of "unlearning people not to think" about what they see, hear, read and consume.

And so ...
"We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time."
T.S. Elliot

Glossary of media literacy terminology

Agenda	Prioritized list of items dealt with by a media text. Powerful media producers are agenda setters according to the agenda setting theory and model.
Audience	The group of consumers for whom the media text was constructed as well as anyone else who happen to be exposed to the text or content. Complex area of media studies which emphasize the importance of how socially formed readers/viewers engage with the media.
Channel	The means and/or device by which a message is transmitted from the communicator to the destination or receiver. In terms of mass media, it means the newspapers, magazines, radio, television, Internet, posters, billboards, movies etc. The means by which an intended message is transmitted between communicator and receiver.
Codes	The systems of meaning production recognized by semiotics. A system of signs based on culturally agreed rules which allow specific cultures to communicate through the use of signs.
Communicator /sender	The producer of the message from which the content of communication originates. In the case of the mass media, the "communicator" mostly consist of groups, organizations or institutions. Mass communicators select and transmit messages purposefully.
Connotation	A description of value, meaning or ideology associated with a media text/content. The meanings interpreted from a sign.
Consumer/s	User of the mass media content; the receiver for whom the message is designed and aimed at and who will buy and apply it.
Constructions	As a verb, the process by which a media text is shaped and given meaning through a process that is subject to a variety of decisions and is designed to keep the audience interested in the text/content. Emphasizes that media texts are "made" and not simply "taken from the real word" or reflected from reality.
Content analysis	Media research technique, describing, analyzing, interpreting and in quantitative analysis, counting the number of times an item or construct appears in a media text
Context	The social, political, economical and historical conditions amongst others which provide a structure and within which certain actions, processes or events are located and have meaning.

Critical/critical thinking A reflective position on the meaning, biases or value messages of text. The ability to use critical thinking skills to view, question, analyze and understand issues presented overtly and covertly in all the mass media, especially the visual media.

Culture An integrated system of learned behaviour patterns which are characteristic of the members of a society and which are not the result of biological inheritance. Include aspects such as beliefs, values, traditions, norms, food, clothing, festivals, ideology, church and religion.

Cultural studies A critical approach to communication analysis that regards the media as a reflection of multiple realities which constitute culture.

Culture industry All the elements and aspects forming the culture of a specific group of people, of which the mass media are one of the primary instruments and the mass audience the primary target groups.

Curriculum Contents and structured plan of certain subjects which are taught in schools.

Decoding Refer to the reading of the message codes in a media text.

Deconstruction The process by which the audience identifies the elements that constitute the construction and meaning with a text. A means of analyzing media texts.

Demographics Recognizable characteristics of media consumers such as age, gender, education and income level.

Discourse Structured representation of events; structured and inter-related interpretation of social and cultural knowledge that express power relations.

Docu-drama A filmed dramatization based on fact that combines documentary and fictional elements. A skillful representation of a real person or event.

Effects/Effect models Models concerned with how the media 'does things' to audiences. Two main categories of effects: specific impact of content on specific individuals in the audience and the general effect of the mass media content on society. Effects are indubitably real, but society's ability to study them qualitatively is weak compared with what can be measured in other aspects of the process. This is the least understood, most debated aspect of mass communication and the mass media content.

Escapism Term applied to genre entertainment, compared with reality.

Feedback The communicated response of the audience to a message sent by any system (mass medium). Difficult to measure and confirm qualitatively and most often measured only quantitatively by circulation figures, box office sales, etc.

Filters Frames of reference that audience members use to understand, accept, reject or remember messages. It can consist of rose-colored glasses (or any other colour), prejudices, cultural preferences, acquired expectations and emotional states – anything brought to a media experience.

Gatekeepers Individuals such as wire-service editors, television network-continuity personnel, motion picture theater managers making decisions about what is communicated and how. They can be positive forces, adding as well as eliminating content. They

delete, insert, emphasize or scrap content according to certain internal guidelines such as aesthetic, financial and time factors. Gatekeepers are internal, regulators are external (see regulators).

Genre — A category of media texts characterized by a particular style, form or content. Organization of media texts and content into types or categories. Categories of media products.

Hegemony — Hegemony or hegemonic refers to power achieved by the dominant resulting from persuading the subordinate that arrangements and belief are in their interest (coined by Gramsci in terms of the media). Coercive control versus consensual control when individuals (the mass audience) willingly take on the world view of the dominant group ("popular culture machines" in terms of the mass media). Power structure within the text and media institutions means that such programs try to promote a preferred reading which is in line with the dominant ideology. It refers to the determining power of the economic base waged by alliances of key groups that have achieved control over the decisive economic nucleus.

High/ low culture — Opera, ballet and formal art constitute high culture versus low or popular culture which are those of the masses.

Ideology — How individuals understand the world in which they live. This understanding involves an interaction between our individual psychology and world view, and the social structures that surround us. Mediating between these are the individual processes of communication as well as the technological processes of the mass media.

Industry — The agencies and institutions involved with the production of media texts. The term is also used in a more narrow sense to describe the commercial production of media texts for the purpose of making a profit.

Intertextuality — The reading of a text in the light of others of similar nature. Intertextuality can create extra layers of meaning and associations leading to an understanding of a text that is based partly on what precedes it or may follow it, or other media texts in other contexts. Intertextuality is often produced deliberately to create references which an audience can easily recognize. A South African example would be the advertisement for beer which is set on a rooftop in New York where South Africans watch a national rugby match.

Mass consumption — (See also Culture Industry.) Mass consumption — modern, and now postmodern cultural life promotes standardized, mass production products that are designed to be consumed in a faddish way. Now-styles in clothes, furniture, food, music, etc. are much less predictable. Postmodernity leads to an extension of culture but also an expansion of commodification of culture (this can be seen positively and negatively).

Mass culture — Opposite of "high" culture; the culture of the mass society such as jeans. Meaning ascribed by "the people" and is synonymous with popular culture the prevailing ideologies in fashion amongst others.

Mass media/medium — Those media that are designed to be consumed by large audiences through the agencies of technology and mechanical devices. Media is the plural for medium, referring to all the communication media such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television, film, billboards, posters, the Internet and others.

Meaning — The ideal in the communication process where the message that was sent and the one received are identical and fully understood.

Mediate — Changing the meaning of any real event through the application of media technology.

Mediation — The act of channeling social knowledge and cultural values through an institution to an audience; the process of selection and shaping to create a range of meanings from public events. The media brings, through mediation, a certain perspective to bear on public issues at the expense of others. A matter of symbolic exchange that is mostly one-sided.

Media education — The process by which a teacher teaches of a learner learns analysis and technical productions skills associated with creating media texts. Traditionally, it has not included the intellectual process of critical consumption or deconstruction/analysis. The terms "media education" and "media teaching" although it refers to the same phenomenon as media literacy, are often more used in the United Kingdom and Europe.

Media literacy — The process of decoding, analyzing and using the mass media in an assertive and active (thus non-passive) way. The includes an informed and critical understanding of the nature of the media, the techniques used by them and the impact of these techniques. The term "media literacy" is more often used in the USA and Canada, meaning that to be a literate person in the 21st century, one needs to know how to "read" and produce all forms of media.

Media studies — The area of study comprising the complex relationships between the media, ideology, knowledge, power and the audience. Includes media history, media industry, media theory and media research.

Media teaching — The functions and responsibilities of the educator involved in media education, where media literacy is the envisaged outcome.

Mediatization — Mediatization is the general process by which the transmission of symbolic forms becomes increasingly mediated by the technical and institutional apparatus of the media industries (Cf. Baudrillard ——: a) Television is the central media in this process; b) Acceleration of media saturation has continued (eg. "in car" entertainment, VCRs, Walkman); and c) Process leads to mediated quasi-interaction due to lack of real interaction between people. The process through which symbolic forms attain value; both symbolic value and economic value.

Message — The content of the communication between communicator and receiver, e.g. the contents of the newspaper, magazine, radio, television, film. The content of the message transfer and act.

Metaphor — A fundamental mode of communicating meaning in which a relationship between two things is suggested through analogy or a simile. Metaphors communicate the meaning of an unknown by transposing it into the terms of the known. Thus the metaphor "my love is like a red, red rose" transposes the known characteristics of a rose to what is unknown, namely "my love". In films, thunder and lightning for example is often used as a metaphor for the inner turmoil of the characters.

Metonymy — Another fundamental mode of communicating meaning. Refers to a relationship between two things which is suggested by association, implying the existence of codes that enable the proper connections to be made. The word means "transposed names" or "substitute meaning". Metonymy works by using parts of elements of something to stand for the whole. News is metonymic: a reported event is often interpreted to represent the whole of reality. Metonyms are supposed to have some sort of indexical or iconic relationship to the thing being described. An example of a metonymical relationship between a symbol and its referent is the use of the word "Crown" or the symbol of the crown to denote British or other Commonwealth government activities (e.g. Crown lands, the Crown Prosecution Service, or the crown symbol on police officers helmets). The Crown denotes the state and all it stands for, but the crown also refers to the physical crown worn by the head of state, the queen.

Model — A model is a simplified representation of a system, which is a subset of the world that is considered to be self-contained. Can be structural or functional, for example.

Narrative — How the plot or story is told. In a media text, narrative is the coherent sequencing of events across time and space. The process as well as the end product of story-telling and mental activity that organize data into patterns or cause-and-effect chains of events.

Negotiate — The process by which members of the audience individually or collectively interpret, deconstruct and find meaning within a media text. It thus also refers to the processes of encoding and decoding.

Noise/interference — Everything which interferes with the sending and receiving as well as sharing of meaning in the communication process between communicator and receiver. This can be internal in the role-players or external in the environment or situation.

Popular culture — The cultural meaning systems and cultural practices employed by the majority classes in a society, e.g. the movie with the biggest gross box office total, the number one song on the hit charts, the most widely read books and the highest ranking television shows. Meaning of the people, synonymous with mass culture and in contrast to high culture.

Production — The industrial process of creating media texts as well as the people who are engaged in this process.

Psychographics — A more sophisticated form of demographics that includes information about the psychological and sociological characteristics of media consumers, such as attitudes, values, emotional responses and ideological beliefs.

Reading — The process of interaction when a text is analyzed as well as the final result of that process, the interpretation.

Receiver/Destination — The person/persons (group/s) for which a message is intended particularly in the context of the mass media where it refers to an audience.

Regulators — Courts, government commissions, professional organizations and public pressure groups have the ability to close down a theater, delete content, influence news coverage and agendas and revoke licenses.

Representation — The process by which a constructed media text stands for, symbolizes, describes or represents people, places, events or ideas that are real and have an existence outside the text.

Sign/s — An inseparable combination of a concept and a sound-image. A sign must have physical forms, must refer to something other than itself and be recognized as a sign by people. Divided into the signifier and the signified.

Soap opera — Radio and television multi-strand, continuous serial narrative form originally designed as a vehicle for sponsorship by soap powder manufacturers, presumably for housewife audiences.

Socialization — The learning process which lets us gain membership in society. Children's social values are well on the way to being established before they have sufficient social experiences to have any rational perceptions of radio or television, but as the media environment gross larger and more ubiquitous, media impact becomes more significant in terms of socialization.

Society — A collection of human beings in one area or country.

Symbol — Unlike a sign a symbol does not have an arbitrary signifier. Refers to semiotics and semiology of De Saussure. Symbols never are wholly arbitrary and it is not empty. There is an rudiment of a natural bond between the signifier and signified. The symbol of justice, the pair of scales, could not be replaced by just any other symbol

Technology — The machinery, tools and material required to produce a media text in the mass media. In media literacy terms, technology greatly impacts upon the construction and connotation of a text.

Target audiences — The specific audiences to be addressed by a specific media text.

Text — The individual results of media production such as a film, book, a TV episode, issue of magazine or newspaper, advertisement, album of music, etc. A signifying structure composed of signs and codes. One encounters open texts and closed texts which are encoded and decoded.

Theory — A set of interrelated constructs [concepts], definitions and propositions that presents a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena.

Uses and gratifications model — Active model of audience behaviour based on needs and need typologies.

(The above definitions and explanations all adapted from dictionaries and the following sources: Boles 2001 [online]; Branston & Stafford 1996: 374 – 389; Cambridge Dictionary for English 2001; Collins School Dictionary 2001; Mediacy Volume 16:3 (Summer 1994) [online]; Hiebert, Ungurait & Bohn 1991 and Sardar & Van Loon 2000: 43 – 49.)

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APPENDIX A

Statements and descriptions of media literacy as encountered in the course of the literature survey

It needs to be mentioned at the outset that some of the 50 following definitions and accounts of media literacy may also include specifications about **who** should become involved, **why** the process is of such vital importance, **how** it should be taught and **what** it strives to accomplish. The majority of the leading scholars in the media literacy field of study act as directors of strong organizations. Therefore specific leaders and/or organizations may be cited more than once, as various aspects of the media literacy phenomenon and process are emphasized in terms of personal and organizational perspectives. (This may partly explain the alleged fragmentary scope of media literacy and confusion about the parameters of the study field, as it is apparent that even some principal media literacy leaders have more than one perspective and description of this concept and process.) The following definitions have been assembled randomly from prominent academic scholars and influential organizations in the media literacy study field. While there are some overlaps, various definitions or descriptions also contain a unique element.

"The ability to choose, to understand — within the context of content, form/style, impact, industry and production — to question, to evaluate, to create and/or produce and to respond thoughtfully to the media we consume. It is mindful viewing, reflective judgement." (**Silverblatt** 1995:2).

Rick Shepherd is of the opinion that "[m]edia literacy is an informed, critical understanding of the mass media. It involves an examination of the techniques, technologies and institutions that are involved in media production, the ability to critically analyze media messages and a recognition of the role that audiences play in making meaning from those messages." (**Shepherd, Teach Magazine** 1993).

"Media literacy seeks to empower citizenship, to transform citizen's passive relationship to media into an active, critical engagement capable of challenging the traditions and structures of a privatized, commercial media culture, and thereby find a new avenues of citizen speech and discourse." (**Wally Bowen, Citizens for Media Literacy** 1996).

The **Aspen Institute Media Literacy Leadership Conference**, an assembly of those working in the media literacy field in the United States and Canada in 1992, after much debate, finally issued a working definition for media literacy: "Media literacy is the ability of a citizen to access, analyze, and produce information for specific outcomes" (Tyner 2001).

W James Potter in his knowledgeable book, *Media Literacy* (2000:5)) said: "Media literacy is a perspective from which we expose ourselves to the media and interpret the meaning of the messages we encounter." For him, media literacy represent "a perspective from which we expose ourselves to the media and interpret the meaning of the messages we encounter" (2000:5). This perspective is built from knowledge structures that we develop with our media skills and the information from the media and from the real world that we take in, consciously and unconsciously. He distinguishes between those who operate with a low-level of media literacy as being merely functionally media literate, and those operating with a high-level of media literacy as having highly developed skills, and being critically media literate. High-level media literate people are able to "place a media message inside the context of a well-elaborated knowledge structure" and are "able to interpret any message along many different dimensions. This gives them more choices of meaning," and highly literate people are thus able to sort through the choices of meaning and select the one that is most useful and appropriate cognitively, emotionally, morally, and aesthetically.

An organization calling themselves **VidKids [VideoKids]** (2001) decided that "[m]edia literacy is the ability to understand how mass media work, how they produce meanings, how they are organized, and how to use them wisely. The media literate person can describe the role media play in his or her life, and understands the basic conventions of various media while enjoying their use in a deliberately conscious way. The media literate person understands the impact of music and special effects in heightening the drama of a television program or film ... The media literate person is in control of his or her media experiences. Media literacy is the ability to understand how mass media work, how they produce meanings, how they are organized, and how to use them wisely."

The Center for Media Literacy (1998) states that "[t]he term media literacy refers to this higher level thinking as it is applied to images and messages of the media". They define the concept as such: "Media literacy encompasses the skills and knowledge needed to question, analyze, interpret, and evaluate the messages of the mass media. In essence, media literacy is the application of critical thinking to the messages of print and electronic media. Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and produce a variety of media texts".

Marshall McLuhan preferred to refer to the term media **analysis**, stating that "I find media analysis very much more exciting now simply because it affects more people than almost anything. One measure of

the importance of anything is : Who is affected by it? In our time, we have devised ways of making the most trivial event affect everyone. One of the consequences of electronic environments is the total involvement of people in people" (1977).

Elizabeth Gourley (1999), renowned media education teacher said that "[m]edia literacy, in its simplest terms, is viewing and reading any media message, even newspaper and magazine articles, critically. A more detailed definition of media literacy involves five principles of knowledge :

- Media messages come in different formats, such as commercials or news articles of billboards.
- All media messages are created by someone for a specific purpose and target a specific audience or audiences.
- All media messages are constructions and they way they are constructed includes both words, images and sounds.
- People interpret media messages differently, based on their own experiences and even prejudices".
- Each media message represents someone's social reality. In other words, just because something is printed and is real does not make it true."

John Pungente (undated), who was mainly responsible for devising a working definition of the phenomenon for the Ministry of Education in Ontario, arguably one of the frontrunners in the world in this regard, came to the conclusion that "Media literacy is concerned with the process of understanding and using mass media. It is also concerned with helping students and children develop an informed understanding of the nature of mass media, the techniques used by them and the impact of these techniques. More specifically, it is education that aims to increase students' understanding and enjoyment of how media word, how they produce meaning, how they are organized and how they construct reality. Media literacy also aims to provide students with the abilities and skills to create media products" (Retrieved on 26 May 2000).

Media literacy aims to assist individuals to examine the role of the media in society. Specifically the **Manitoba Association for Media Literacy [MAML]** (1997) wishes to provide individuals with an opportunity to :

- Develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to interpret the ways in which media construct reality ;
- Develop and awareness of the social, cultural, political and economic implications of these constructions and their pervasive value messages ;
- Develop an appreciation and aesthetic understanding of the media (Retrieved on 27 February 2001.)

The **Center for Media Literacy** (undated, retrieved on 4 August 2002) defines media literacy as "a critical life-skill for children and adults in today's media culture -- an expanded definition of literacy beyond reading and writing, to include how to read the messages conveyed through visual images (television and movies), music, advertising, etc" (CML). They also propose that "[m]edia literacy education teaches critical and analytical viewing skills to people of all ages so they can better understand and navigate our media culture. Print literacy (the ability to read and write) is no longer enough. Everybody, but especially kids, needs to learn how to "read" the messages in **visual** images (TV, movies, ads) the same as they need to know how to read the words on a page. A media literate person doesn't know all the answers, but knows how to ask the right questions: Who created this message? Why? How and why did they choose what to include and what to leave out of this message? How is it intended to influence me? And more. Media literacy is also knowing how to create media messages, whether it's a newsletter, a video, or other formats. When kids learn what goes into making a message, they also learn what's left out of the final message that the audience sees, and that helps them realize that ALL media messages they see and hear are constructed, i.e., somebody made them, they didn't just happen". CML emphasizes on not only being able to disseminate a media text, but also to apply their skills to producing media, conscious of what goes into a message.

"A media literate person – and everyone should have the opportunity to become one – can access, analyze, evaluate and produce both print and electronic media. The fundamental objective of media literacy is critical autonomy relationship to all media. Emphases in media literacy training range widely, including informed citizenship, aesthetic appreciation and expression, social advocacy, self-esteem and consumer competence". This is the definition assembled in the **Report of the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy in Maryland** (Aufderheide 1992).

Prof Suzuki Midori, media literacy campaigner in Japan: "Media literacy is the people's abilities to critically analyze and evaluate (what they see, hear and read: the media. Further, to have wider access to various media and to express themselves by producing social communications in a variety of forms. Since acquiring the ability to critically analyze the media requires learning, a range of educational activities are inseparable from the term. Media literacy also means various forms of educational activities to develop media literacy defined above" (undated, retrieved on 23 July 2002). Midori is actually of the opinion that media literacy merely means "unlearning not to think" (1999).

Gary Ferrington, media education instructor at the University of Oregon-Eugene insists that: "[m]edia literacy is a field of study concerned with helping young people to understand the role of media in daily life and to assist them in evaluating how such media influences their personal desires, choices, and decisions" (undated, retrieved on 17 July 2002). Ferrington's definition focuses on the youth, and how youth must learn to negotiate the media they come into contact everyday, and to realize the influences that media may be exerting on them.

The famous Media Literacy Project at Babson College's definition of media literacy (n) is:

- the process of asking questions about what you watch, see and read
- literacy skills applied to mass media culture and information technology messages
- a necessary skill for life in a media saturated society (Hobbs undated, retrieved on 23 July 2002).

The Media Literacy Resource Guide from the Ontario Ministry of Education states that "[m]edia literacy is concerned with helping students develop an informed and critical understanding of the nature of mass media, the techniques used by them, and the impact of these techniques. More specifically, it is education that aims to increase students' understanding and enjoyment of how the media work, how they produce meaning, how they are organized, and how they construct reality. Media literacy also aims to provide students with the ability to create media products" (Media Awareness Network undated, retrieved on 21 July 2002).

Bill Walsh (undated, retrieved on 8 August 2002), an acknowledged media specialist and educator involved with the Center for Media Literacy, defines media literacy education as "teaching students about and with the media they know and use every day". Walsh emphasizes teaching media literacy by teaching about media and through media usage. "There are two parts to the media literacy equation — receiving messages and sending them — and together they add up to empowering students for living and learning in the 21st century".

Yet another of the world's most prominent forerunner's in the media literacy realm, **David Considine,** states that "[m]edia literacy is an expanded information and communication skill that is responsive to the changing nature of information in our society. It addresses the skills students need to be taught in school, the competencies citizens must have as we consume information in our homes and living rooms, and the abilities workers must have as we move toward the 21st century and the challenges of a global economy" (undated, retrieved on 20 November 2001).

Nancy Richard from the Cape Code Community Television: "To become critical readers and viewers, we must shed our innocence and understand how we are being manipulated. This loss of naiveté coupled with a healthy skepticism will empower us. When we ask questions, engage in dialogue with other critical thinkers and begin to deconstruct media, we gain [or regain] control over our perceptions" (undated, retrieved on 14 July 2002).

The University of Oregon (undated, retrieved on 20 November 2001) states that "[t]elevision viewers must regulate for themselves the effect of the images they see by analyzing the material, deciphering its hidden agendas, then choosing the values and ideas they wish to espouse. Therein lies the basis of personal autonomy-informed choice."

Media literacy can be seen as an extension of more prevalent literacy fields in the United States, and increasing print literacy and computer literacy. **Kathleen Tyner, in her book *Literacy in a Digital World*** (2001), claims that "[m]edia literacy attempts to consolidate strands from the communication multi-literacies that correspond with the convergence of text, sound, and image". Media literacy can be seen as the collective ability to negotiate all types of communication — print/text-based, screen/image-based, electronic/computer-based. Without the skills and knowledge accumulated and required to be "literate" in each of the individual literacies, media literacy would be difficult to obtain. These skills are necessary to understand and interpret the different types of media — print, television, and the Internet (including the special categories of advertising and news). Each of these literacies have their roots in traditional print literacy.

The organisation, **Strategies for Media Literacy** (in San Francisco) defined media literacy in their publication *Media & YOU: An elementary curriculum* as follows: "Media literacy is the ability to understand how mass media work, how they produce meanings, how they are organized, and how to use them wisely. The media literate person can describe the role media play in his or her life. The media literate person understands the basic conventions of various media, and enjoys their use in a deliberately conscious way. The media literate person understands the impact of music and special effects in heightening the drama of a television program or film...this recognition does not lessen the enjoyment of the action, but prevents the viewer from being unduly credulous or becoming unnecessarily frightened. The media literate person is in control of his or her media experiences" (undated, retrieved on 21 April 2002).

Prof Reneé Hobbs, being a highly prominent media literacy leader, is occupied with the central question: Do images tell the truth? What meanings do different people see in images? She therefore claims that "[m]edia literacy incorporates the theoretical traditions of semiotics, literary criticism, media studies, communication theory, research on arts education, and language and literacy development." (Hobbs 1997).

The following definition of media literacy came from of the **Trent Think Tank** (1989), at a symposium for media educators from around the world sponsored by the Canadian Association for Media Literacy: "The goal of the media literacy curriculum must be to develop a literate person who is able to read, analyze, evaluate, and produce communications in a variety of media (print, TV, computers, the arts, etc.)."

The Center for Media Literacy (CML) advocates learning "to use critical thinking skills in accessing, analyzing, evaluating and creating media" and that "[m]edia literacy is a critical life skill for children and adults in today's media culture -- [and is] an expanded definition of literacy beyond reading and writing, to include how to read the messages conveyed through visual images (television and movies), music, advertising, etc." For adults, "media education...is important because a healthy democracy (and a healthy planet) depends on citizens who are informed about how media influence the way we live our lives — as individuals, families, consumers, community members, and as voters" (undated, retrieved on 29 July 2002).

The Media Literacy Online Project of the University of Oregon-Eugene (undated, retrieved on 17 November 2002) propagates the following definition: "[t]he importance of studying the media is ... tied up in the importance of studying all the various literacies that exist. Media literacy is not a individual entity or individual set of skills, but rather a "multi-literacy" and a continuum of other literacies, a multiplicity of skills and knowledge.

The Media Literacy Online Project, which is a project of the College of Education at the University of Oregon at Eugene, defines media literacy as "concerned with helping students develop an informed and critical understanding of the nature of the mass media, the techniques used by them, and the impact of these techniques. More specifically, it is education that aims to increase students' understanding and enjoyment of how the media work, how they produce meaning, how they are organized, and how they construct reality. Media literacy also aims to provide students with the ability to create media products" (undated, retrieved on 11 November 2002).

The National Media Education Conference is supported by the Partnership for Media Education (PME), and they support media literacy by stating that they propose to "stimulate growth in media literacy education in the United States by organizing and providing national leadership, advocacy, networking and information exchange." The PME works to "promote the incorporation of Media Literacy into state K-12 standards and frameworks" and "support and/or conduct research that will help persuade states to adopt media literacy standards" (undated, retrieved on 16 April 2002).

The Media Awareness Network (MNet) is a Canadian project which "offers practical support for media education in the home, school and community and provides Canadians and others with information and "food for thought" on our fast-evolving media culture. It's also a place where educators, parents, students and community workers can share resources and explore ways to make media a more positive force in children's lives." The site features online discussion groups, teaching curriculums, and media-related news. *MNet* provides both curriculum-related media and Web literacy teaching materials for schools, and media awareness resources for community organizations and actively works to:

- support media education in schools;
- promote media education and media management in the home;
- support community-based media awareness activities;
- promote consumer awareness and action for quality children's media,
- and government policy.

The Media Awareness Network continues to explain the process of media literacy as one where "engagement moves viewing media texts and formats (e.g a specific commercial) from a passive experience to something to consider and react, and eventually changes the viewing experience. Being a critical viewer of commercials is a starting place for critical thinking about all media messages. The active consideration of all of the elements of the media message, the personal contemplation of its meaning, impressions, and implications, and the ensuing reactions constitutes Media Literacy".

"Critical media literacy may be defined as the ability to reflect on the pleasures derived from mass media and popular culture practices [e.g. radio, TV, video, movies, CDs, the Internet, gang graffiti and cyber culture ; the ability to choose selectively among popular culture icons ; and/or the ability to produce one's own multimedia texts" (**Luke** 1999 in Alvermann & Hagood 2000: 195).

Art Silverblatt, Professor and Chair of the Department of Media Communications at Webster University in St. Louis, Missouri, defines the goals of media literacy as the ability to "better understand the information conveyed through the channels of mass communications—print, photography, film, radio, and television" and to "realize a healthy independence from the pervasive influence of the media and make up your own mind about issues" (Silverblatt 1995: ix). Silverblatt acknowledges that economy is the fundamental guiding principle in the media industry, but contends that media channels are inherently neutral, and any values assigned to media is by the information conveyed through them, those who create the information, and those who receive the information. "The media can be used for many purposes and either used well or badly, depending on the intention—and skill—of the media communicator" (Silverblatt 1995: x). Silverblatt supports the rationale that media literacy is media liberty — that is, freedom from the pervasive effects and influences of a variety of media. The ability to make your own decisions and construct your own point of view figures largely in his definition.

Prof Renee Hobbs ventures a personal perspective: "Put simply, media literacy includes the skills of literacy extended to all message forms, including those little black squiggles on white paper. Media literacy includes reading and writing, speaking and listening, critical viewing, and the ability to make your own messages using a wide range of technologies, including audio technology, billboards, cameras,

camcorders, and computers. However, media literacy is not a new subject area and it is not just about television: it is literacy for the information age" (Media Studies Journal 1994).

Project Look Sharp (undated, retrieved on 19 September 2002) teaches people to access, analyze, critically evaluate, and produce communication in a variety of forms. We define "media" very broadly to include television, radio, books, magazines, newspapers, billboards, movies, recorded music, video games, and computer-assisted communication (such as the Internet)".

The National Telemedia Council, Inc. (NTC) (1998) publishes the Australian *Telemedium, The Journal of Media Literacy.* NTC published an issue dealing exclusively with media literacy and the Internet in Summer 1998.

The Media Education Foundation is a "non-profit educational organization devoted to media research and the production of resources to aid educators and others in fostering analytical media literacy" (undated, retrieved on 21 March 2002), who offers a catalog of resources, including study guides and videos in order to promote media literacy.

The Media Literacy Clearinghouse (2000) includes "numerous articles, background and lesson plans designed to help teachers integrate media literacy into classroom instruction."

The AMLA (Alliance for a Media Literacy America) maintains that "[m]edia literacy empowers people to be both critical thinkers and creative producers of an increasingly wide range of messages using image, language, and sound. It is the skillful application of literacy skills to media and technology messages. As communication technologies transform society, they impact our understanding of ourselves, our communities, and our diverse cultures, making media literacy an essential life skill for the 21st century". AMLA is committed to promoting media literacy education that "is focused on critical inquiry, learning, and skill-building rather than on media-bashing and blame. This national, grassroots membership organization will be a key force in bringing media literacy education to all 60 million students in the United States, their parents, their teachers, and others who care about youth" (1996).

Newcomer to the media literacy scene, **Susan Freas Rogers,** runs a website titled **medialiteracy.com** (http://www. medialiteracy. com/sitead min/about.htm on 8 August 2002). "A number of years ago, **U.S. media literacy folks** decided that this was the most concise way to define media literacy: the ability to

access, analyze, evaluate and communicate information in a variety of formats, including print and nonprint."

The Just Think Foundation encourages teacher and students to think critically to gain a greater comprehension of and perspective on media and technology, so they can:

- Understand media messages
- Master media and technology tools
- Express their ideas effectively
- Engage positively with local and worldwide communities.

The **Just Think Foundation** is committed to promoting media literacy education focused on critical inquiry, learning, skill-building and hands-on production for and by youth. Media education, according to them, is the process of applying literacy skills to media and technology messages as well as learning to skillfully interpret, analyze, and create messages. *Just Think* believes that putting the media tools and thinking skills in the hands of young people is the most effective (and often only) method to developing aware-ness of the impact of media on youth (undated, retrieved on 3 August 2002).

AML (Association for Media Literacy) is "concerned with helping students develop an informed and critical understanding of the nature of the mass media, the techniques used by the media industry, and the impact of these techniques. Media literacy also aims to provide students with the ability to create their own media products." (undated, retrieved on 3 August 2002). The AML has members from across Canada, throughout the United States, and from around the world. Our international membership is particularly strong in those English-speaking countries where the educational system has given some priority to media literacy, notably England, Australia and Scotland as well as the U.S. goal of the AML is to promote the understanding of culture and technology through media education. AML seeks to do this through education of students, teachers and the public; through lobbying governments and media industries, and through networking with those with shared concerns in education, business, government, media, and community organisations.

The University of Winnipeg's Library and Information Studies Department defines media literacy as "[t]he ability to successfully and critically navigate the complexities and pitfalls of this media universe may be called **media literacy**. The development of these skills is, in turn, one of the **multiple literacies** associated with **Information Literacy**. Media literacy is **not** an anti-media movement. Instead, it is an essential skill not only for students gathering information for coursework, but for citizens seeking to make

educated decisions about many of the vital social, environmental and economic **issues** facing our society today" (undated, retrieved on 29 May 2002).

Prof. Reneé Hobbs, in her personal capacity, is of the opinion that "[a]s we enter the twenty first century, it is essential that the schools be places that help students better understand the complex, symbol-rich culture in which they live in" (1997). Hobbs states that "[a] new vision of literacy is essential if educators are serious about the broad goals of education: preparing students to function as informed and effective citizens in a democratic society; preparing students to realize personal fulfillment; and preparing students to function effectively in a rapidly changing world that demands new, multiple literacies."

The Northwest Media Literacy Center declares that "[t]he term "media literacy" is to be used in two ways:

- It is the ability to critically assess media messages in order to understand their impact on us, our communities, our society and our planet.
- It is also a movement to raise awareness of media and their influence.

In each case media literacy changes a passive relationship with the media into an active one based on critical thinking, reflection and sharing of perceptions. Media literacy should reach into every home and school. Today most children are exposed to media without any guidance or training. For example, television and video games often become "electronic baby sitters." These media then become alarming addictions and powerful influences on values and behavior. The consequences are staggering" (undated, retrieved on 8 August 2002).

Elizabeth Thoman, President and Founder of Center for Media Literacy constructed the following definition: "Media literacy is a burgeoning educational movement to teach analytical and critical thinking skills about television, video, advertising, print and the Internet. This is complemented by creative production activities to help young people learn to both "read" and "write" for full participation in their 21st century media culture".

The Rocky Mountain PBS Media Literacy Project asserts: "An increasingly important topic for students in the new millennium, media literacy means the ability to critically view what one sees in all forms of media. From television shows to the Internet, the media influence the way we view our world. Television in particular in 99 percent of homes in the United States, plays a huge part in defining values and beliefs as a society ... we run the risk of allowing the business behind television to create our values" (undated, retrieved on 8 August 2002).

David Walsh, Ph.D., the founder and president of the National Institute on Media and the Family works towards a mission of the National Institute on Media and the Family, which strives to maximize the benefits and minimize the harm of media on children and families through research and education. The National Institute on Media and the Family is a non-profit, non-partisan and non-sectarian organization. "We do not advocate censorship of any kind. We are committed to partnering with parents and other caregivers, organizations and corporations in using the power of the free market to create a healthier media diet for families, so that we have healthier, less violent communities. We seek to educate and inform the public, and to encourage practices and policies that promote positive change in the production and use of mass media" ((undated, retrieved on 8 August 2002).

According to the **American Academy of Pediatrics**, a media literate person under-stands that:

- All media messages are constructed for some purpose.
- Media messages shape our understanding of the world.
- Each person interprets media messages uniquely.
- Mass media are often driven by powerful economic and political forces (1998).

Linda Ellerbee, Nick News, states that "[m]edia literacy is not just important, it's absolutely critical. It's going to make the difference between whether kids are a tool of the mass media or whether the mass media is a tool for kids to use" (undated, retrieved on 13 October 2002).

Semioticians (undated, retrieved on 14 July 2002) ask similar sets of questions than media literacy teachers do, e.g..

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ATE}

- Who created the message?
- What medium was employed?
- For whom it was intended?
- In what context was it transmitted?
- To what code does it belong?

Any prospective media literacy educator can find still many other definitions of media literacy by searching the Internet, starting with the **Media Literacy Awareness Network's list of definitions** (http://www.media-awareness.ca/eng/med/bigpict/ml what.html). Another good starting point is the **University of Oregon at Eugene's Media Literacy Online Project's** list of definitions and articles on http://interact. uoregon.edu/MediaLit/FA/articles/medialit.html). A host of other definitions and

Appendix B

Chapter 3.5: Prominent international media literacy academics and organizations

1. *The Guidance Channel's* top ten media literacy websites

An authoritative learning channel on the Web, The Guidance Channel (www.guidancechannel.com) aiming to equip the youth with life and orientation mentoring and skills and assistance for learning subjects (violence prevention, therapy and counseling, remedial education and substance abuse and prevention) list their *Top Ten Media Literacy Websites.* Although these websites according to this channel should not be accepted as ultimately authoritative, these organizations and websites are possibly the most active and certainly "exceptional" in the opinion of this organization.

- Action for Media Education, University of Washington
- The Center for a new American dream: kids and commercialism, USA
- Center for Media Education, Canada
- The Center for Media Literacy, North America
- Children Now: Children and the media
- Consumers Union: Selling America's Kids
- Just Think
- The Media Awareness Network, Canada
- Media Literacy Clearinghouse (for educators), Canada
- Project Sharp: Incorporating Media Literacy into any curriculum.

While these specific organizations certainly possess attractive websites and plenty of vital information about media literacy and the need thereof, there are plenty of other organizations with equally effective webpages and a wealth of facts regarding media literacy, with advice for ordinary citizens, such as parents and families, teachers, youth leaders, churches and people concerned about the effect of the media. It is however very difficult to establish which of these many organizations and media literacy advocates are "best" or most advanced. It will be mentioned later in the thesis that many of these media literacy leaders and organizations borrow quite deliberately from one another, which leads to duplicity of definitions and statements as well as teaching methods and guidelines to make people think critically about the need for media literacy (see 5.2.1).

2. Prof. Renee Hobbs

Hobbs launched the Billerica Initiative in 1995, consisting of a master's degree in media literacy and which was the first such degree program in the nation serving as a model for other districts. This degree

focuses on Assessment of Student Learning, Outreach to the Professional Community, Technology in Schools and continued professional development in other regional and national states, based on a Scotland model of media literacy. Hobbs insists that there must be a balance between print and media skills for media literacy as well as traditional reading and writing. She actually sees media literacy as a model for a new way of all kinds of teaching in the USA.

Hobbs and Frost (2001) unequivocally state that media literacy and education is still such a "relative new" subject in the United States that *even the term and its meaning is still a matter of debate*. According to these researchers, the most widely recognized definition comes from the National Leadership Conference on Media Education which was held in the early 1990's, where media literacy was defined "as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate messages in a variety of forms". During 2001, media literacy as a part of the formal curriculum frameworks could be found in more than fifteen states in the USA.

3. Prof. David Considine (at the Appalachian State University)

This university is one of very few educational faculties in the USA which offers formal graduate and post-graduate courses in Media Literacy. The driving force behind this development is David Considine, professor of Media Studies and Instructional Technology. Considine and his wife, Gail Haley, wrote the first media literacy books aimed to help teachers. This couple developed a series of workshops, called VIEW, presented all over the USA. Considine is one of the major forces in the USA media literacy and is allegedly in constant demand across the USA for training and lectures.

4. Father John Pungente

Father John J. Pungente possesses master's degrees in both English, Film and Theology, and was granted an honorary doctorate in 1999. He became involved with the media when he started as teacher of media, English and religion in 1971, before he was assigned to the Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture in England in 1983. Here he conducted intensive research on media literacy around the world, which results were published in 1985 as "Getting Started on Media Education."

He co-authored *Media Literacy: A resource Guide for the Canadian Government* in 1989 as well as *Meet the Media* in 1990, which focused on 11 to 15 year olds. He is the creator and host of the award-winning Bravo monhtly television show, Scanning the Movies, which premiered in 1997. He served since 1985 as the executive Secretary of the Ontario-based Association for Media Literacy and organized several media education conferences. He sees his main task as promoting media education across Canada – arguably one of the world leader in media literacy, and was the leading organizer of one of the biggest international conferences on media literacy till date, held in Toronto for media professionals and media educators during May 2000. Pungente is adamant that television and the other media is not the devil's tool, and he resists censorship while teaching parents, teachers and

children media literacy. Cuff (1996) claims that there is "probably no-one who knows more about the state of media literacy and media education than Pungente".

5. Wally Bowen and Citizens for Media Literacy

Former journalist Wally Bowen founded Citizens for Media Literacy in 1991, which focus on grass-roots teaching and functions as an advocacy project. It is also a strong clearinghouse of information and curriculum materials and offer plenty of workshops and symposia on media literacy topics for teachers and parents in conjunction with the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania. In 1993, the group published *Get A Life!*-comic book detailing the life of a teenager as he received a behind-the-scenes tour of television. This publication is beamed into approximately 12 000 USA schools daily (--------).

Bowen laments the ambivalence of leaders of the U.S. media literacy movement to challenge the hegemonic nature of the U.S. media industry as a result of several reasons:

- American media educators do not want to be perceived as aiding and abetting conservative media critics with tones of censorship;
- U.S. media educators are not yet immune to the pressure of colleagues in the media industry as it often is a primary source of dunging;
- The inherent conservatism of public school bureaucracies discourages the broader examination of media culture inherent in a cultural studies approach, with emphasis on questions of political economy, power relations, hegemonic influence etc.;
- The U.S. media literacy movement does not have the common grounding in a cultural studies approach that lends breadth and coherence to the British, Canadian and Australian movements (Bowen 1995).

3.7.6 Elizabeth Thoman (Center for Media Literacy [CML])

Elizabeth Thoman founded the Center for Media Literacy in 1976 in Los Angeles and has never since stopped her pioneering work to get media literacy established in schools but also on community levels. Under her guidance, the center offered courses to educators wanting to learn about media literacy. They also have a very significant newsletter going out to numerous receivers and have the most comprehensive on-line resource library on the Internet. The very next year, 1977, the *Association for Media Literacy [AML]* was founded by Barry Duncan, who was to also become a household name in the world of media literacy. The Association hosted mini-conferences where media professionals and educators every gathered for a full week to analyze, understand and interact with the media in classrooms as well as on field trips to the industry. The AML has also held an international conference during 2000 in Toronto.

The 1990s have seen an explosion in the movement of media literacy which can probably be ascribed to the contributions on and of the Internet, enabling strong organizations and even grassroots groups as well to reach the masses with their calls to action and damage control. Another Canadian group practicing structured Media Literacy is the *Adbusters* magazine based in Vancouver. This group also established *World Buy Nothing Day* in November and *TV Turn-off* week (see 4.12.5) (annually) in April, which encourages and challenges citizens to re-evaluate their lifestyles within a consumer society.

In 1987, at the Faculty of Education, University of Toronto, an additional qualification course, **Media Part 1**, was offered to 40 teachers. These courses have continued to provide the necessary leadership in the field for Ontario school boards. The University of Western Ontario is now offering such a course. In 1993 the University of Ottawa offers a similar one.

7. Art Silverblatt

Art Silverblatt has possibly produced the most texts and research on media literacy, and is a staunch advocate of the fact that there are certainly careers for students in the realm of this phenomenon. He emphasizes the fact that media literacy is a critical thinking skill applied to the sources of most of our information to wit the mass media. Silverblatt is currently professor and head at the Department of Communication and Journalism at Webster University, St Louis, Missouri. He co-authored an excellent *Dictionary of Media Literacy*, which is a compendium of organizations, notable people and concepts in this field and which is viewed as "a guide to the burgeoning discipline of media literacy". He wrote three other books on media literacy.

8. James Potter

W. James Potter has been teaching media courses for nearly two decades, especially in the areas of effects on individuals and societies, content narratives, structure and economics of media industries, advertising, journalism, programming and production. He taught at the University of California, Santa Barbara, Indiana University, Florida State University, UCLA and Stanford University. It seems as if Potter has a preference for the medium of books, and published a book titled *Media Literacy* (1997 and 2001) there are four foundational ideas which are critical to understanding and approached .He has specific ideas about the teaching of media literacy, and proposes four basic principles or fundamental ideas (see 4.4..3).

9. Andrew Hart

Andrew Hart, England's media literacy trump-card together with Len Masterman and David Buckingham, published a Practical Guide titled *Understanding the media* in 1991 (with reprints in 1994 and 1997). Hart and Cooper developed a series of programmes for the BBC's Radio 4, and focus on problems that teachers who are not media literate, but should teach the subject in Britain's schools, encounter — how

to begin teaching about the media, how to organize practical work, including practical examples of classroom activities. The book contains some lesson plans related to the requirements of the British National Curriculum and Examining Boards. Hart is currently a lecturer in Education in the School of Education at the University of Southampton.

10. Prof. Len Masterman (United Kingdom)

Masterman repeatedly urges teachers that "the really important and difficult task of the media teacher is to develop in pupils enough self-confidence and critical maturity to be able to apply critical judgments to media texts which they will encounter in the future ... The primary objective is not simply critical awareness and understanding, it is critical autonomy" (Masterman 1985:24). Ontario echoed this by stating that students who are media literate will be have the ability to decode, encode and evaluate the media symbol systems that dominate their worlds (Pungente 2001a).

This undisputed leader of the media literacy movement in the United Kingdom, next to Andrew Hart and David Buckingham, suggested that media education moved on considerably when its agenda turned away from the aesthetic emphasis propagated by Hall and Whennl in 1984, towards a more broadly culturalist concern, when teachers and students attempted primarily to understand rather that merely appreciate the mass media. "It was the development of a critically informed intelligence in relation to the media that was to become the key objective for most media teachers, rather than the nurturing of finely honed aesthetic judgments" (Hamelink & Linné 1994:311).

By 1991, Green (in Jensen & Jankowski 1991:219) stated that "over a time a certain stability regarding the ends and means of media education is reached. Masterman describes how the development up to the early 1980s was no real development at all, supplying very little solutions to the problems that the schools which have started with media education, have experienced. This most significant insight was to focus on the aspect of the media being representations, never presenting reality, and conceptualizing the first issues to be treated from there. In the mid-1980s the development was irrevocably towards new dialogic ways of working with pupils and students, and towards an integration of practical criticism with a critical rather than reproductive or productive angle.

Although the development of curricula called media studies particularly in England was spectacular during the 1980s, it did not by a near margin keep up with the phenomenal pace of mass media development during the decades of the eighties and nineties all over the planet. The expansion of and drive behind the implementation of media studies was motivated from the relevance of the media, communication and culture in their lives. It was not very long however, before the teaching of these subjects lost touch with the realities of the revolutions taking place in the media themselves as well as the media environment (Masterman in Hamelink & Linné 1994:316).

The development and growth of media studies, media education and media literacy is taking place despite conflicting motivating impulses. "While the massive presence of mass media in everyday life

might in itself motivate general training about, through, and for the media at all levels of the education system, there are at least two distinct positions with respect to the purposes of such training" (Jensen & Jankowski 1991: 217).

11. Prof. Suzuki Midori: Japan and the East

Midori is described as a "tireless advocate of media literacy for more than two decades [in Japan]. She has lead the Forum for Citizen's Television and Media (FCT) since 1977, and has facilitated numerous citizens' "media watch" projects (Jennison 2002). She also translated and published the famous Ontario Education Ministry's Resource Guide on Media Literacy, and is hailed for introducing Japanese people to the notion of the critical analysis of the media from the standpoint of audiences, especially those socially and economically disadvantaged. Midori worked with the Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto to develop university-level courses in media literacy, but her primary passion is to develop grass-roots citizens movements for media literacy. She maintains that media literacy is a lifelong-learning experience, and therefore establishes learning centers, as well as developing curricula for high schools and universities.

12. Paul Messaris and visual literacy

Paul Messaris (see also 2.4.4) is undeniably prominent in the realm of visual (media) literacy, together with Joshua Meyrowitz, who also studies the impact of these electronic media on social behaviour. Messaris wrote several books (see reference list) on visual aspects of media literacy, in which he presents factual information about media literacy with a focus on media language and its distinctive characteristics. He also specializes in the role of analogical thinking in visual literacy and analysis of the syntax of visual language.

13. The National Telemedia Council (Madison, Wisconsin)

Started in 1953 by a group of concerned teachers, it is a non-profit educational organization which promotes media literacy for the young by means of teachers, librarians, parents, media professionals and researchers. It functions as a clearhouse and center for media literacy and has an extensive resource bank of media literacy from around the world. They publish a quarterly letter, *Telemedium,* with articles from leading media literacy specialists, and offer continuous workshops.

14. Swamp (Houston, Texas)

The Southwest Alternate Media Project is a Houston-based nonprofit regional media arts center which has conducted residencies in schools, community centers and art organizations for the past 20 years. Over the past five years they developed training workshops and seminars which incorporate analysis

with aesthetic and production elements of media literacy whilst also hosting workshops, presentations and in-service programs to role-players all over the United States.

15. Northwest Media Literacy Institute (Seattle, Washington)

In April 1993 almost 200 artists, educators, parents, students, producers and media literacy specialists from the USA, Canada and Australia met for a weekend of presentations called *Teaching Media Literacy: Talk Back and Take Charge.* The conference resulted in the establishment of the Northwest Media Literacy Institute [NMLI] with the mission to advocate an interactive relationship between citizens and media. This is done by training and media literacy resources to artists, educators, students, parents, community groups and the general public throughout the Northwestern USA. Important leaders involved with this organization are Robin Reidy, Gloria DeGaetano, director of Train of Thought Consulting, which aims to make public aware of media literacy concepts.

16. Strategies for Media Literacy (San Francisco, California)

Former television producer and teacher, Kathleen Tyner, founded Strategies for Media Literacy in 1989 as a non-profit organization that promotes media literacy beginning in primary education. It also develops and publishes materials, identifies resources, conducts workshops and serves as a support center and contact for teachers of media in the USA. Strategies is the organization's quarterly newsletter with articles, exercises and resources. Working with Deborah Leveranz at SWAMP, they offer media literacy workshops across the USA, and a very unique electronic bulletin board service on the Internet, offering free information on current media education news and events.

3.7.17 Name/Namac (Oakland, California)

During the Independent Images Conference held in Houston in 1992, the National Alliance for Media Education (NAME) was formed to connect and foster media literacy initiatives, to bring together leaders in media arts education and the industry and to support teaching of media in schools and community centers. Patrick Scott sees media literacy as an interdisciplinary movement and so considers it important to work with three specific groups : media artists, community groups and classroom teachers who all need one another. They may make use of the Media Education Directory Project in conjunction with the National Telemedia Council.

18. The National Media Literacy Project: Pilot State, New Mexico

The most extensive and state-wide USA media literacy initiative was launched in New Mexico in March 1993, which was further developed by the Downs Media Education Center, run by Hugh Downs, previous television presenter and producer, and who trains teachers and principals. It has strong support of the Department of Education, who brought many stake-holders together in March 1994 to

plan strategies to develop media literacy in New Mexico. The have succeeded in the meantime to involve teachers, parents and children in the home media literacy programs, with an official Media Literacy Day on April 8.

19. University of Utah, Department of Communication

Jim Anderson, chair of the Department of Communication and one of the founders of USA media literacy, and Karen Webster started work in 1994 on an elementary school media literacy research partnership between Utah, Salt Lake City School District and the KSL Broadcast Industry.

20. Educational Video Center (New York)

Started in 1984 by Steven Goodman, the Education Video Center [EVC] is also a non-profit organisation that promotes the educational use of video in schools and youth programs in New York City. They offer student workshops and training for teachers, particularly about issues such as drug abuse, AIDS and the environment. They focus extensively on media analysis, and their documentaries on media literacy have won over sixty awards nationally and internationally. Goodman is still active in the media literacy initiatives with the Center.

21. Signal to Noise and MAP (New York)

Cara Mertes and Norman Cowie are involved with the annual Five College Summer Institute in Media Literacy. Mertes produced numerous programmes — such as *Watching TV Watching Us* — about the relationship that people should have with television, and that it should not ever be a mindless, take-for-granted exercise to watch television. These programmes focus on grass roots efforts to use media, the media literacy movement, public access and media watchdog groups.

22. Boston Film/Video Foundation and The Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities

Founded in 1976, this organization is currently New England's largest media arts center, with the sole purpose of encouraging public understanding and use of the media as creative forms. They offer one hundred courses in production each year as well as screenings and production and post-production facilities. The Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities was established in 1974 and is a private non-profit organization affiliated with the National Endowment for the Humanities. They already held three summer institutes in media literacy, and succeeded in 1994 to engage the general public in discussion on the role of the mass media in society. Prominent people involved here is Anne Marie Stein and Gail Reimer, who together published *TV Eye: A curriculum for the media arts* (written by Dr Renee Hobbs). Reimer is convinced that media literacy courses have a firm basis in critical theory and analysis.

Appendix C

STATISTICS: SOUTH AFRICAN MEDIA CONSUMPTION

CELL-PHONES

Almost 7,5 million South African people have access to cell-phones, and therefore also make use of SMS's.

NEWSPAPERS

The total newspapers in the various categories available to media consumers, are as follows:

Table C.1: SAARF (http:www.saarf.co.za/pressreleases, retrieved on 10 March 2003).

CATEGORY OF NEWSPAPER	SPECIFIC NAME	READERSHIP in 1000s
Daily newspapers	Beeld	338
	Burger	503
	Business Day	104
	Cape Argus	410
	Cape Times	304
	Citizen	579
	Daily Dispatch	203
	Daily News	309
	Diamond Fields Advertiser	51
	Herald	167
	Mercury	219
	Natal Witness	141
	Pretoria News	105
	Sowetan	1 927
	The Star	627
	Volksblad	103
Weekly newspapers	Burger (Saturday)	589
	Citizen (Saturday)	774
	City Press	2463
	East Cape Weekend Post	140
	Herald (Saturday)	191
	Independent on Saturday	309
	Mail & Guardian	271
	Natal Witness (Saturday)	149

	Naweek-Beeld	211
	Post (Wednesday)	340
	Pretoria News Weekend	91
	Rapport	1 508
	Satruday Dispatch	98
	Saturday Star	540
	Soccer Laduma	1 803
	Sowetan Sunday World	1 123
	Sunday Independent	234
	Sunday Sun	1 250
	Sunday Times	3 528
	Sunday Tribune	686
	Volksblad (Saturday)	112
	Weekend Sunday Argus	297
Classified newspapers	Cape Ads	257
	Junk Mail	445
Bi-weekly newspapers	Ilanga	637
Monthly newspapers	The Teacher (M & G)	173
ALL NEWSPAPERS	**TOTAL READERSHIP**	**13 396**

Table C.2: SAARF (http:www.saarf.co.za/pressreleases, retrieved on 10 March 2003).

TYPE OF NEWSPAPER	READERSHIP
Total newspaper readership	13,324 million, with general upward trend for the medium
Dailies readership	5,045 million, up under ages 16 – 24
Weeklies readership [excluding community newspapers and freesheets	9.097 million
Community newspapers and freesheets	6.472 million
Weeklies readership including community newspapers and freesheets	11.72 million
Any newspaper, excluding community newspaper and freesheets	11.073 million

In the latter half of 2002 four newspapers came onto the market — daily papers *Daily Sun* and *Isolezwe*, and weekly papers *Post Weekend* and *Sunday Sun*. The daily newspaper sector has shown "significant growth", while weekly papers, community papers and freesheets have maintained previous levels. A significant growth of newspaper readership in the LSM (Living Standard Measurements) 9 and 10 were detected.

MAGAZINES

South Africans saw six new magazines on the market in 2002: *CityLife* (revamped); *Siyavaya, Blunt, In House Club, Personal Finance* and *Auto Trader.*

Table C.3: SAARF (http:www.saarf.co.za/pressreleases, retrieved on 10 March 2003).

CATEGORY OF MAGAZINE	NAMES OF MAGAZINES	READERSHIP IN 1000s
11 Weekly magazines	Drum, Farmer's Weekly, Finance Week, Financial Mail, Finansies & Tegniek, Huisgenoot, Landbouweek-blad, Soccer News, Time, Vrouekeur and You	7 392 000 per week 29 568 000 per month
3 Fortnightly magazines	Fair Lady, Kickoff, People	3 212 000 per two weeks 6 424 000 per month
42 Monthly magazines	Animal Talk, Baba en kleuter, Bike SA, Bona, Car, Caravan and Outdoor Life, Compleat Golfer, Conde Nast H & G, Cosmopolitan, DIT, Drive, Elle, Enterprise, Essentials, Femina, FHM, Finesse, Food & Home Ent. Getaway, GQ, House and Leisure, Hustler, Insig, Joy!, Living and Loving, Longevity, Man Magnum, Marie Claire, Men's Health, National Geographic, Out there, Pace, PC Format, PC Magazine SA, Reader's Digest, Rooi Rose, Runners World, SA 4x4, Sa Computer Magazine, SA Country Life, SA Garden & Home, SA Gardening, SA Golf Digest, SA City Life, SA Sports Illustrated, Sarie, Shape, SL, Smart Investor, Style, Stywelyne/Tight Lines, Top Forty, Topcar, Tribute, True Love, TV Plus, Wiel, Wine magazine, Woman's Value, Y Magazine, Your Baby, Your Family	24 529 000 per month
Newspaper and subscriber magazines	Club (Lewis), Best Electric, Club (Foschini), Club Together, Edgars Club Magazine, Dish/Skottel, Magic M, M Choice & Dish, Radio & TV Talk, Rapport Tydskrif, Sunday Times Magazine, Vodaworld Magazine	8 870 000
Two-monthly and quarterly magazines	GQ SA, SA Cycling Magazine, SA Home Owner, Y Mag, Your pregnancy, De Kat, Lucerna, The Motorist	717 000 per term 239 000 per month
ALL MAGAZINES		**61 738 000 per month in 1000s**

RADIO

Radios, one or more, are present in 90% of the rural populations, and 92% of urban households. The country currently has 125 radio stations: 42 commercial and 83 community, with 43 stations in

Gauteng only, making it the most radio-dense part of the country. Therefore this region's listeners listen to at least 2.2 stations per week, 27.8 hours on 5.7 days of the week.

The industry has Monday to Friday penetration of listenership of 77.3% of the population; Saturday penetration of 73% and Sunday penetration at 71% (rounded off). People spend an average of 3.9 hours listening per day to radio, and 27,2 hours per week. Total community radio listenership is growing and currently stands on 1.99 million listeners.

TELEVISION VIEWING

There are increasingly more TV sets entertaining South African families: 45% of rural households have television, while urban television penetration is at 84%. SAARF reports that there has been a great deal of movement within the TV arena, while the winner remains e.tv. with SABC1 close behind.

Television viewership remains stable, with Monday to Friday viewing set at 65,3%, Saturday at 63,8% and Sunday at 61,8%. People watch on average 3,2 hours of television a day, and almost 23 hours per week.

SABC1: 14.301 million viewers on weekdays
12,294 million on Saturdays, growth in rural Kwazulu Natal, females, 16 – 34s
Sundays show growing male audience

SABC 2: 5.273 million viewers on Sundays
5,4040 million viewers on Saturdays

SABC3: No figures released, but only stated that levels remain stable from the previous term.

e-tv: Growing right across.
6.899 million weekday viewers
7.541 million Saturday viewers

6.376 million viewers on Sundays

M-Net: weekdays 1.468 million
Saturdays 1,387 million
Sundays 1.711 million

DStv Most popular channels viewed during the week: *Sport* and *Movie Magic*

Most popular programs on television for the period 17 February 2003 to 23 February 2003. These programs should be an indication of viewer preferences:

SABC 1: Generations, The Bold and the Beautiful, Yizo-Yizo and Emzini Wezinsizwa.
SABC2: Nuus, Sewende Laan en Lotto Game Show.
SABC3: World Cup Cricket, Isidingo: The Need, Law and Order, Charmed (drama), and Secrets of Nature.
e.tv: International smackdown, Virus, Eddie, The Last Boy Scout, Velocity, Walker Texas Ranger, Seven Days, International Raw, the Ultimate Force (all films) and Felicia on E.
M-Net: Egoli Place of Gold, A Knights Tale (film}, Rugby, Carte Blanche, Philly (sitcom).

OUTDOOR MEDIA

The outdoor sector apparently flourishes and can even be described as showing a "phenomenal growth" during the first half of 2002, attracting the attention of vast numbers of South African in terms of billboards and store advertising which are both increasing. Billboard exposure is set at 70% penetration, truck advertising of 44% penetration, and advertisements on transport also going up.

FILMS/CINEMA

Theatre attendance stands at 6%, while there are not figures for video and DVD rental for home-showing purposes.

INTERNET USAGE

Home usage of the Internet is currently 2,4%, and work usage 1.7%. This clearly shows a vacuum, where enormous growth should be expected over the following decade. Many scholars and industrialists are of the opinion that the new media definitely poses a threat to traditional media in South Africa (Lehini 2000).

HOME MUSIC CENTRES

Hi-fi's and music centres are present in 40% of all rural homes, and 66% of all urban homes.

Appendix D

Constructs emerging from content analysis on 50 statements about media literacy

CONSTRUCTS	Knowledge contents	Affective qualities	Conative qualities [the will]	Skills [psycho-motor, behavioural]	Why teach media literacy?	Techniques to apply in the process of learning	What is the focus to be taught?	Who should learn?	Who should teach?
Ability, abilities				☑					
Ability to filter messages			☑	☑	☑				
Access media messages									
Active participation	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
Aesthetic appreciation		☑	☑		☑		☑		
All people								☑	
Analyze	☑			☑			☑		
Application of critical thinking	☑		☑		☑	☑	☑		
Appreciation of media		☑	☑		☑		☑		
Asking questions about content	☑		☑				☑		
Attitude to media, right		☑			☑		☑		
Audiences, importance of							☑	☑	
Awareness of necessary balance	☑		☑		☑		☑		
Challenging traditions of commercial media culture			☑	☑	☑	☑	☑		
Children and adults								☑	☑
Choose [selectively], choices			☑	☑	☑		☑		
Citizens								☑	
Collective ability, increase the				☑	☑			☑	

CONSTRUCTS	Knowledge contents	Affective qualities	Conative qualities [the will]	Skills [psycho-motor, behavioural]	Why teach media literacy?	Techniques to apply in the process of learning	What is the focus to be taught?	Who should learn?	Who should teach?
Competencies	☑	☑		☑			☑		
Conscious and alert media exposure	☑		☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
Construct own point of view			☑	☑	☑		☑		
Constructed reality, understand				☑					
Constructions of media							☑		
Control media intake				☑	☑				
Consumer competence			☑		☑		☑		
Conventions of media, understand							☑		
Create quality media messages and content			☑	☑	☑				
Critical thinking	☑		☑	☑	☑	☑	☑		
Critical autonomy	☑		☑	☑	☑		☑		
Critical life-skill			☑	☑	☑		☑		
Deciphering of media agendas			☑		☑		☑		
Deconstruct messages			☑	☑	☑				
Deliberate conscious way									
Describe the role of media							☑		
Develop	☑	☑	☑	☑		☑			
Dialogue with others						☑			
Disseminate	☑				☑			☑	☑
Educators, parents, students and community workers								☑	☑
Empowered citizenship					☑		☑		
Enjoyment of the media, enhance		☑			☑				
Evaluate			☑	☑		☑			
Examination	☑		☑			☑			
Expanded communication and information skills			☑		☑		☑		
Expression		☑		☑	☑	☑			
Form/style of mass media							☑		
Gain control over perceptions	☑	☑		☑	☑	☑	☑		
Healthy democracy			☑		☑		☑		

CONSTRUCTS	Knowledge contents	Affective qualities	Conative qualities [the will]	Skills [psycho-motor, behavioural]	Why teach media literacy?	Techniques to apply in the process of learning	What is the focus to be taught?	Who should learn?	Who should teach?
Healthy independence			☑		☑		☑		
Healthy skepticism			☑		☑	☑	☑		
Helping young people					☑	☑	☑		
Higher level thinking			☑		☑	☑	☑		
How media produce meaning	☑				☑		☑		
Impact of media	☑						☑		
Impact of techniques used by media [e.g. propaganda]	☑						☑		
Industry [media] Informed	☑					☑		☑	☑
Informed food for thought		☑	☑		☑			☑	
Institutions [media]							☑	☑	☑
Interpret media messages		☑		☑		☑			
Interpret meaning in media		☑		☑	☑				
Knowledge structures	☑				☑				
Learn to negotiate			☑	☑	☑				
Liberty		☑	☑		☑				
Literacy skills				☑	☑	☑			
Look for patterns			☑		☑				
Make own decisions			☑	☑	☑		☑		
Meaning [of media messages]	☑								
Media culture, understand and deconstruct, popular culture	☑	☑			☑		☑		
Mindful viewing			☑		☑	☑	☑		
Nature of mass media	☑						☑		
Navigate media environment			☑	☑	☑	☑	☑		
Organized thinking	☑					☑			
Popular media content, popular culture, mass culture	☑				☑	☑	☑		
Process of media production, understand	☑								
Produce media messages				☑		☑			

CONSTRUCTS	Knowledge contents	Affective qualities	Conative qualities [the will]	Skills [psycho-motor, behavioural]	Why teach media literacy?	Techniques to apply in the process of learning	What is the focus to be taught?	Who should learn?	Who should teach?
Questions	☑		☑			☑			
Read messages	☑				☑				
Realize influences of media	☑		☑		☑		☑		
Reflect on media content				☑		☑			
Reflective judgment			☑	☑	☑	☑			
Regulate media intake/diet			☑		☑	☑			
Right questions, asking of			☑		☑	☑	☑		
Self-control about media intake		☑	☑	☑	☑				
Self-esteem not based on media	☑	☑	☑		☑		☑		
Shed innocence about media messages			☑		☑	☑	☑		
Skills				☑					
Social advocacy of media, understand implications of	☑	☑			☑	☑	☑		
Social, cultural, political and economic implications, understanding of ...	☑		☑		☑		☑		
Students								☑	
Teaching						☑			
Techniques						☑			
Technologies of mass media, understanding of	☑						☑		
Transform people			☑		☑	☑			
Understand manipulation	☑	☑	☑		☑		☑		
Use media wisely			☑	☑	☑	☑	☑		
Values, teaching of	☑	☑	☑		☑				
Viewing, mindful			☑		☑	☑			
Workers, media								☑	☑

Appendix E

Categories for units of content analysis of 50 statements on media literacy

(This table should be read in conjunction with Appendix D, featuring the units of analysis which has been categorized in the following table.)

CATEGORY (CONSTRUCT TYPE AND UNITS OF ANALYSIS)	CONSTRUCTS (SELECTED WORDS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)
COGNITIVE/ INTELLECTUAL CAPABILITIES DEVELOPING DURING TEACHING OF MEDIA LITERACY **CONTENTS (referring to WHAT) SHOULD BE LEARNED** **These constructs all refer to the dissemination of specific learning units and knowledge contents, as well as certain cognitive development taking place in the learners. The isolation of these items will simplify the establishment of points of departure in the teaching of media literacy.**	Analyze, analysis of media content Asking questions about media content, messages, communication Awareness of necessity for media intake/diet balance Challenging traditions of commercial media culture Choose selectively Competencies [intellectual] Conscious and alert media exposure Constructions of reality (understand that media are..) Critical thinking Deciphering of media agendas Deconstruct media messages Decode media messages Deliberate conscious way Describe the role of the media Dialogue with others about media content Evaluate Examination Gain control over perceptions Healthy skepticism Higher level thinking How media produce thinking/perceptions Impact of media techniques [understand] Information Informed Informed food for thought Institutions of media [understand] Knowledge structures Make own decisions Meaning of media messages Media culture (understand and deconstruct) Mindful viewing Nature of mass media (understand) Organized (thinking) Process (of thinking and skills) Questions to be asked about media content Reading (media messages) Realize effects of media

	Reflect, reflective judgment Right questions Role of the mass media [understand] Social advocacy of media implications [understand] Social, cultural, political and economic implications (understanding of...) Teaching Understand manipulation Viewing, mindful
AFFECTIVE ABILITIES AND SKILLS DEVELOPING DURING TEACHING OF MEDIA LITERACY **("Capturing the hearts and minds of learners"; the will and the choice to become media literate rather than use media dysfunctionally)** **CAPABILITIES: WHAT AND HOW**	Ability to filter messages Active participation Aesthetic appreciation Appreciation of media content Attitude to the media, right ... Control over media intake Create quality media messages and content Enjoyment of the media Expression Gain control over perceptions Healthy independence Interpret Interpret meaning of media messages Liberty Look for patterns Make own decisions Mindful viewing Self-esteem not based on media (development of ...) Shed innocence Transform people Understand manipulation Use media wisely Values, teaching of .....
PSYCHO-MOTOR SKILLS: BEHAVIOUR AND CAPABILITIES DEVELOPING DURING TEACHING OF MEDIA LITERACY **WHICH SKILLS SHOULD BE ACQUIRED?**	Ability to filter messages Active participation Analysis of messages Challenging traditional commercial media cultures Choose selectively Collective abilities, increase competencies, developing.. Conscious and alert media exposure Construct own point of view Consumer competence Control over media intake Create media messages with quality content Critical thinking, autonomy, life-skill Develop media analysis Dialogue with others, stimulate and through Evaluate Expression of ideas Gain control over perceptions Interpreting meaning and messages Learn to negotiate and navigate Literacy skills, media Look for patterns Make own decisions Navigate media environment Produce Reflect Reflective judgment Self-control Skills, developing of ...

	Use media wisely
CONATIVE REQUIREMENTS **WHICH ARE PREREQUISITES for MEDIA LITERACY TEACHING** **If learners do not want to become empowered, they will not do so.** **Only solution is to negativity is to explain WHY it is so crucially important to become empowered with reference to the media**	Active participation Application of critical thinking Appreciation of media Awareness of necessary balance Challenging traditions of commercial media Construct own point of view Control Critical thinking and life-skill Dialogue with others Empowered citizenship Evaluate Examine the media Gain control over perceptions Healthy independence and skepticism Higher-level thinking Learn to negotiate meaning Make own decisions Mindful viewing Navigate Reflect Regulate media diet Self-control Shed innocence Use media wisely Values
THE WHY: **REASONS FOR NECESSITY AND TEACHING OF MEDIA LITERACY. THESE CONSTRUCTS CAN SUPPLY POINTS OF DEPARTURE IN THE TEACHING OF THE MEDIA.**	**To foster the development of :** Ability to filter negative and damaging content Active participation in communication process Analysis of media messages to filter negative effects Appreciation of media, aesthetics Critical thinking Attitude, right ... to the media Choosing of right media content Challenging of traditional and commercial media communication Collective abilities of media consumers Conscious and alert media exposure Construction of own viewpoints Consumer competence Control over media intake Creation of quality media messages and content Critical thinking, autonomy, life-skills Deciphering of media agendas Deconstruction of communication messages Empowered citizenship and democracy Enjoyment of the media Expanded communication and information skills Expression Gain control over perceptions Healthy democracy Healthy independence, skepticism Higher-level thinking Informed thinking on media Interpretation of messages, decoding of media content, reading messages Learn to negotiate meaning Making own decisions Mindful viewing and exposure Navigate media environment

	Realize detrimental influences of the media Reflective judgment Regulate media-diet and intake Right questions, asking of ... Self-control and discipline Shedding of innocence about media content and constructions Skills, life-skills Understanding of social, cultural, political and economical implications of media Transform people from mindless consumers (couch potatoes) Understand manipulation and propaganda Use media wisely Values Viewing, mindful
THE HOW: **TECHNIQUES TO BE APPLIED IN THE TEACHING OF MEDIA LITERACY.** **METHODS ACCORDING TO WHICH MEDIA LITERACY CAN BE FOSTERED AND DEVELOPED.**	Active participation (in mass communication and media process) Application of critical thinking Assisting conscious and alert media exposure Challenging traditional functions and aims of media such as profit Dialogue with others Developing control over perceptions Higher-level thinking methods, developing of literacy skills (traditional) Navigation of media environment (what is good and what is bad) Mindful and alert viewing and exposure Organize media exposure and intake Produce media messages Questions must be asked continuously Reflection and judgment Regulation of media diet Shedding of innocence about aims of media Social advocacy of media implications (social, cultural, political and economic) Teaching Understand technologies of mass media Using media wisely Values, teaching of .....
POSITIVE RESULTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION **(CAN ALSO BE SEEN AS AIMS OF MEDIA LITERACY)**	Active participation (in mass communication and media process) Application of critical thinking Conscious and alert media exposure Challenging traditional functions and aims of media such as profit Dialogue with others, fostering ... Developing control over perceptions Higher-level thinking methods, developing of Literacy skills [traditional], increasing Navigation of media environment (what is good and what is bad) Mindful and alert viewing and exposure Organization of media exposure and intake Production of quality media messages Questions will be asked continuously Reflection and judgment Regulation of media diet Shedding of innocence about aims of media Social advocacy of media implications (social, cultural,

	political and economic) Understand technologies of mass media Using media wisely Values, teaching of .....
WHO SHOULD LEARN AND BECOME MEDIA LITERATE	All people Audiences Children and adults Citizens Parents Media industry Media institutions Media workers Students
WHO SHOULD TEACH AND DEVELOP MEDIA LITERACY IN LEARNERS?	Teachers [all teachers in all classes and curricula] Educators Parents Students Community workers Media industry Media institutions Media workers

ABSTRAK (OPSOMMING VAN TESIS)

Hoewel die dissipline van mediastudie nie 'n nuwe verskynsel in die breë akademiese dissipline van kommunikasiekunde is nie, is die verskynsel en terminologie van mediageletterdheid egter nie so bekend nie. Die media skep en handhaaf, en versterk selfs die populêre en massakultuur, wat die tradisionele teoretiese beskouings van die media as funksionele draers van kultuur en instrumente van sosialisering bevestig.

Die transaksionele perspektief van kommunikasie in hierdie tesis is verplaas na die konteks van massamediaverbruikers (aan die kommunikasie-ontvanger se kant) van die massaboodskappe in die massamedia self. Hierdie perspektief het die gebruikersgratifikasie-hoofstukke ten opsigte van media-effekstudies ingelui. Mediageletterdheid, daarenteen, neem hierdie aktiewe rol van die ontvanger en mediaverbruiker selfs verder, en poog om gewone mense, veral jong mense wat dikwels as die mees aktiewe kopers en beïnvloedbare gehore van die massamedia se boodskappe beskou word, te bemagtig en te leer hoe om die inhoud van die media krities te evalueer en bewustelik te dekodeer.

Studies ten opsigte van die se psigologiese verhouding met die media suggereer dat hierdie verbruikers moontlik dikwels self kies om nie die inname van hul media-dieet te balanseer nie, maar juis gedy op 'n sinnelose inname daarvan, vir talle behoeftes en redes. Een van hierdie redes mag egter wees dat hulle bloot nie genoeg van massakommunikasie en die massamedia as instellings weet nie.

Mediageletterdheid is 'n essensiële lewensvaardigheid vir enige persoon wat met die alomteenwoordige massamedia in 'n moderne gemeenskap in aanraking kom. Met die nodige kennis en ontwikkeling van fundamentele vaardighede, kan alle leerders hulle genieting van die massamedia juis verhoog wanneer hulle mediageletterd is. In die lig van die feit dat sensuur van potensiële negatiewe media-inhoud nie wenslik is nie, spekuleer talle studies steeds oor die verband tussen samelewingsprobleme enersyds en die massamedia se inhoud andersyds, wat mediakundiges en navorsers skaakmat laat ten opsigte van hierdie gewilde en kragtige "massa-agente van kultuur".

Mediageletterdheid is daarop gerig om leerders met kennis oor die aard en kenmerke van die massamedia, sowel as oor spesifieke kwessies soos onder meer stereotipering, gender-veralgemening, geweld, mediahegemonie, die skepping van massa- en populêre kultuur en ander effekte van die media toe te rus. Leerders kan beide kognitiewe sowel as emosionele kompetensie en psigo-motoriese vaardighede verwerf, ten einde die verskeie mediaformate en

inhoud te betree (*access)*, dekodeer, evalueer en ontleed. Die kritiese konatiewe aspek — verwysend na die bewustelike keuse om eie mediablootstelling te moniteer ter wille van genot en positiewe gratifikasie — kan ook hersien word sodra mediaverbruikers oor die aard en rol van die massamedia ingelig word.

Mediageletterdheid in essensie is die toepassing van kritiese denke op die massamedia, die inhoud en effekte daarvan. Gesondheidswaarskuwings oor die inherente gevare van rook, alkohol, vetterige kos en cholesterol is volop, terwyl opvoeding van die mediaverbruikers oor die effekte van "ongesonde" media-inhoud selde aangetref word. Soos wat ouers hul jong kinders leer om die potensieel-gevaarlike konteks van straatverkeer en paaie te betree, behoort jong mense en toekomstige mediapraktisyns — en inderdaad alle mense — opgevoed te word ten opsigte van die hantering van die latente gevare van die massamedia.

Terwyl literatuur talle ingrypend-verskillende benaderings tot die onderwys van mediageletterdheid oplewer, is daar 'n prominente afwesigheid van Suid-Afrikaanse akademiese inhoud en navorsing oor die onderwerp. Die primêre doel van hierdie studie is daarop gerig om 'n model vir die onderwys van mediageletterdheid op tersiêre vlak in Suid-Afrika te ontwikkel en aan te bied, en om die huidige gefragmenteerde en jong dissipline van mediageletterdheid op internasionale vlak, in die lig van die talle verskillende perspektiewe en stellings rondom die onderwerp, te eksploreer en te verhelder.

'n Gemeenskap en samelewing met krities-denkende individue en gehore wat pertinente vrae oor die inhoud van die massamedia kan vra, kan bepaald die kwaliteit van die massamedia-inhoud positief beïnvloed, en sõ die mediabedryf en –praktisyns verplig om in 'n meer transaksionele en interaksionele verhouding met hul gehore te tree. Laasgenoemde sal slegs in staat wees om 'n gebalanseerde benadering tot die media vol te hou as 'n gevolg van mediageletterdheidsopvoeding. Opvoeding oor die massamediabedryf, en die inhoud en moontlike effekte daarvan, is die enigste oplossing om verbruikers te ondersteun ten einde nie voortdurend deur die media mislei te word nie, en op bemagtigde en selfstandige wyse met die massamedia in boodskapdeling te tree.

SLEUTELTERME: Mediastudie; mediageletterdheid; media-opvoeding; media-onderwys; massamedia-effekte; massamedia en gehore; transaksionele kommunikasie; kommunikasiestudie; kommunikasie en massamedia; kommunikasie en mediastudie; populêre kultuur.

ABSTRACT [SUMMARY of THESIS]

Although the discipline of media studies is not new to the broad academic field of Communication Science, the phenomenon of media literacy in the media studies landscape is not so familiar. In short, the mass media create and maintain popular and mass culture, confirming the traditional theoretical functions as prominent carriers of culture and instruments of socialization.

The transactional perspective of communication has been transposed in this thesis to the context of mass media consumers at the receiving end of mass communication via the mass media. The latter perspective heralded the user gratification chapters in the media effects history. Media literacy, however, takes this active role even further, and aims to empower and teach *ordinary people*, specifically young people who are often viewed as most susceptible audiences of mass media messages, to critically evaluate and mindfully decode the mass media contents.

Studies on the audience's psychological relationship with the media suggest that these consumer often possibly prefer not to critically choose the contents of their media diet, but paradoxically thrive on a senseless absorbing thereof for various reasons.

Media literacy is a vital life-skill for any person interacting with the profuse mass media in modern-day society, and with the necessary knowledge and development of skills, all learners can enhance their enjoyment of the mass media when they are media literate. While censorship of detrimental media content is not advised, prolific studies speculate about the link between societal problems and the mass media content, leaving media academics and scholars at an *impasse* with these powerful "mass cultural agents".

Media literacy activities aim to furnish learners with knowledge about the nature and characteristics of the mass media as well as specific issues such as stereotyping, gender portrayals, violence, media hegemony, the creation of mass and popular culture and other effects of the media. Learners can acquire both cognitive and emotional facilities as well as psycho-motor skills in order to access, decode, evaluate and analyze different media formats and contents. The vital conative aspect — implying the conscious choice to manage media exposure often for the sake of pleasure and positive gratification — can also be redressed when consumers become enlightened about the nature and role of the mass media.

Essentially, media literacy is *critical thinking* applied to the mass media. Health warnings about the inherent dangers of smoking, alcohol, fatty foods and cholesterol are rife, whilst education for media consumers about the effects of "unhealthy" media content seems to be rare. In the same manner that parents teach children how to navigate the potentially dangerous realm of traffic and roads, young people and future media workers — all ordinary people indeed — should be educated how to negotiate the latent dangers of the mass media.

Although literature produces many and various approaches to the teaching of media literacy, there is a prominent lack of South African academic material and research on the subject. The primary goal of this study therefore is the development of a model for teaching media literacy on a tertiary level in South Africa, and to elucidate the currently fragmented and young discipline of media literacy on an international level in the face of the many different perspectives and definitions ascribed to the subject.

A society with critical-thinking individuals and audiences who can ask pertinent questions about the content of the mass media, can raise the quality of the mass media's content and so compel the media industries and professionals to enter into a more transactional and interactional relationship with their audiences, who can maintain a balanced approach to the media as result of media literacy. Education about the mass media industry, its contents and possibly effects is the only solution to assist consumers in not being misled continuously by the media.

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