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Finnish Media Literacy Education Policies and Best Practices in Early Childhood Education and Care Since 2004

Leena Rantala

Ministry of Education and Culture, Division for Cultural Policy, FINLAND

Abstract

The purpose of the article is to describe Finnish media literacy policies and good media education practices in early childhood education and care. This article will focus on describing two central action lines related to the Children and Media Program, initiated by the Division for Cultural Policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2004. These action lines include the reform of the legislation for the protection of minors and the distribution of audiovisual programs in Finland, and the development of the Media Muffin project, including implementation, evaluation and publication of resource materials. In exploring these two initiatives, this paper identifies the relationship between programmatic actions that focus on teacher education and larger policy initiatives that promote media literacy education for young children.

Keywords: *media literacy, policy, national, Finland, children, culture, audiovisual, education, World Summit*

Recently, media literacy of young children has begun to gain visibility due to the expanding media environment, in particular the rise of Internet use among children under pre-school age in most Western countries. In Finland, the development of media education in early childhood education and care has been an agenda for cultural policy since 2004, alongside with the aim to protect the minors from harmful audiovisual content.

The aim of this paper is to introduce Finnish media literacy policies and good media education practices in early childhood education and care. Accordingly, this paper will describe the Children and Media Program initiated by the Division for Cultural Policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2004. The paper will focus on two central action plans related to the program: 1) the Media Muffin project in 2006-2007 as well as the project evaluation and the following publications in 2008-2011, and 2) the reform of the legislation for the protection of minors and the distribution of audiovisual content in Finland.

In this paper, I introduce recent research related to young children's media use. After that, I describe the Finnish context of early childhood education and care and cultural policy, the Children and Media Action Plan and the key components of the Media Muffin Project

as well as the main outcomes of a pilot study and an evaluative study related to the project. In addition, I introduce the main elements of the legislative reform, including policies that will come into force in January 2012. Finally, I will discuss the potential implications of this policy and its implementation.

Media and Young Children

In general, research on how children use media has focused on school-aged children and young people. Therefore, little information has been compiled on the reality of young children's media environment (e.g. Souza and Cabello 2010a, 9). These authors argue that the lack of research relates to three factors: (1) there is limited media material aimed at young children; (2) some countries exclude these age groups from audience measurement systems and this age group includes a cohort age 0 to 2 years, for whom television is discouraged; and (3) the media consumption of this age group has been underestimated.

It seems, however, that in recent years the interest in young children's media use has increased, for instance in the United States (Rideout et al. 2003; Wartella et al. 2010), Latin America (Souza and Cabello 2010b) and in the Nordic Countries, such as Sweden

(Småungar & Medier 2010) and Finland (Kotilainen 2011). Research on young children's Internet use has also been developed, for example, in Sweden (Findahl 2010). Additionally, examples of media education materials targeted to very young children can be found such as the Hector's world website in New Zealand (www.hectorsworld.com).

It seems obvious that the current media environment of young children is diverse as Internet use among them is increasing. Research from the EU Kids Online project (Livingstone et al. 2011) shows that on average, children are nine when they first go online, and this age of first Internet use is dropping across Europe. The average age is seven in Denmark and Sweden, and eight in several other Northern countries (Norway, Finland, the Netherlands and the UK) as well as in Estonia. Thus, the EU Kids Online research suggests that online safety measures should be targeted to younger children (Ibid.). Regarding Finnish children's media environment, media use begins at a very early age. One-year-olds are already daily in contact with television. Books and TV are the most popular media among 5-6-year-olds. A majority of 7-8-year-olds use a wide range of media including the Internet, mobile phones and digital games (Kotilainen 2011). One study, entitled, *Children's Media Barometer* (2010) concludes that this has implications for media education, as there is a need to enhance the supply of information as well as provide more opportunities for self-expression and participation with age-appropriate media for children. In addition, children need opportunities to have adult support and increased awareness concerning their media use and various activities with media culture.

The Finnish Governmental Context for Media Education in Early Childhood

Media literacy is a subject that relates to a variety of policy sectors in the government in Finland, such as education, communications, cultural and social policies. This paper focuses on media education in early childhood education and care as well as the Children and Media Action Plan initiated by the Division for Cultural Policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Currently, early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Finland is located within the domain of social services. However, according to the Government Program of the Cabinet of Prime Minister Katainen (dated in 17 June 2011), responsibility for the day-care system will be transmitted from the Ministry of

Social Affairs and Health to the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Ministry of Education and Culture is already responsible for pre-primary education as well as the provision of morning and afternoon activities for schoolchildren. A government resolution concerning the national policy definition on early childhood education and care was given in Finland in 2002. The National Institute for Health and Welfare gave the National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care in 2003. The Finnish National Board of Education defined the core curriculum for pre-primary education in 2000, and the latest update was made in 2010.

ECEC is a service for children from one to 6 years old and their families. Children permanently living in the country have a right to participate in voluntary pre-primary education during the year preceding compulsory schooling. A Finnish child usually starts school at the age of seven. Pre-primary education and schooling are free. In practice, pre-school education for six-year-olds has been implemented as a mixed model, in which the local authorities may decide whether to provide pre-school education within the day-care or school system. Children attending pre-school education have a subjective right to day-care as a complement to pre-school education (Heinämäki 2008). The underlying core principle in pre-primary education is to guarantee basic educational security for all, irrespective of their place of residence, language and economic standing. As a whole, the system of ECEC can be described with the concept of EduCare. This concept relates to the ECEC model of a Nordic welfare state, where care, education and instruction are combined to form an integrated whole and where play is a central tool of pedagogical activities (Heinämäki 2008).

The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for cultural policy in Finland. The general objectives of cultural policy relate to creativity, cultural diversity and equity. The aim is to realize cultural rights and ensure access to art and cultural services for all residents in Finland. Media education is acknowledged in a strategy for cultural policy as follows: "art and cultural heritage education, the system of art education and increasingly also media education reinforce the underpinning of culture" and the desired state of affairs in 2020 is that "art, cultural heritage and media education has a more visible place in society" (Strategy for Cultural Policy 2009).

In practice, with respect to cultural policy, media education relates in particular to audiovisual policy and children's culture. Audiovisual policy involves, for instance, measures to promote digital film, television and audiovisual culture. Children's culture means efforts to promote art and cultural services targeted to children as well as children's own creations. That includes promoting children's culture in libraries, media literacy and film education.

The Children and Media Program

The roots of media education in Finland go back to the 1950s. The goal of the audiovisual education of that time was the critical understanding of cinema and making best use of the role of film as an educational tool. In the 1970s, Finland was a pioneering country in media education when the curriculum for mass communication education, which had been developed in the country, was spread globally by the UNESCO. After the 1980s the media culture re-search perspective entered media education. In the 1990s, media education turned to communication education, including the dimensions of expression and doing. According to researchers, the beginning of the 2000s is a more fragmented era in Finnish media education. However, digital games, the opportunities of net-based technology and social media and the various combinations of media could be the main subjects describing the current situation (Kupiainen, Sintonen, Suoranta 2008; see also Finnish Media Education Policies 2009).

In general, the media education initiatives in Finland have mainly targeted school-age children and young people. This lack of young children as target groups in media education was a key starting point of the Children and Media Program initiated by the Division for Cultural Policy in the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2004. The original name for the program was Media Violence. Children and Media (Mediäväkivalta. Lapset ja media 2004). This action plan related to the 2003 Government Program of the first Cabinet of Prime

Minister Vanhanen, which proposed measures aiming to protect minors from entertainment based on violence. Accordingly, in 2003 the Ministry of Education and Culture initiated preparations for the Children and Media program in order to chart the different aspects and required development areas in children's media environment. A number of stakeholders were consulted in this preparation stage¹.

A main principle of the program was to take into account the changing media environment and patterns of media usage by children. The idea was to maximize safety in this new situation. However, it was realized that with the ongoing technological development, the distribution channels for media content will be diverse and therefore it would be impossible to protect minors only by controlling the distribution of content by the measures of authorities. Therefore it was emphasized that in the future there would be a need to develop more intense national and international co-operation in order to protect the children together with the governments, media industries and parents.

The Children and Media Program was published in 2004. The program identified nine separate areas from which operational conclusions were drawn: (1) legislation related to audiovisual programs that violate criminal law, (2) legislation related to protecting minors from harmful audiovisual content, (3) research and distribution of information, (4) new aspects of media education, (5) the responsibilities of media industry, (6) filtering systems usage, (7) production of quality content for children, (8) digital inclusion and (9) supporting parents and family. These areas are described more detailed in Appendix A. Overall, the Children and Media Program includes a wide range of actions. In what follows, I will introduce two important operational efforts implementing the action plan, the Media Muffin Project and the legislation reform. In practice, quite many of the ideas suggested in the Children and Media Program have been and will be realized in these two operational efforts.

¹ The stakeholders mentioned in the action plan are: the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Finnish Board of Film Classification, the National Bureau of Investigation, the Finnish Customs, the Finnish Communication Regulatory Authority, Consumer Agency, the National Board of Education and the National Institute for Health and Welfare. In addition to a variety of authorities, civic organizations in the field of child welfare and media education as well as media industries, the Finnish Film Foundation, universities and other research organizations and local schools and libraries were involved in the preparation of the program.

The Media Muffin Project

An innovative initiative was launched in the beginning of the year 2006 with the goal of improving the media literacy of young children (eight years old and younger), and to support professional educators and parents in media education. The project aimed to improve the media education awareness in early childhood education and care, the first grades of primary school, and in the morning and afternoon activities for schoolchildren. The project also aimed to inform parents about young children's media education. In addition, the Media Muffin project attempted to support the consolidation of the position of media education in Finland by promoting the integration of media education into the documents governing early childhood education and care and morning and afternoon activities. Below I describe the implementation of the program and then report on its evaluation.

Program Characteristics and Implementation

The starting point of the Media Muffin project was that media education refers to learning and growing up with media. Media education consists of everyday activities in day care, schools, and morning and afternoon activities, and its goal is to develop young children's ability to deal with the different messages in media and to participate in media culture. The project emphasized that there is no minimum age for starting to learn media literacy, and that the task of the educator is to get familiar with the child's media environment and to offer safe experiences with media.

The project was carried out by three civic organizations: the Centre for School Clubs, the School Cinema Association, and Media Education Centre Metka. They all receive a portion of their annual funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture. In addition to these participants, the project was supported by major media education and teaching organizations in Finland, such as the University of Tampere. The Ministry of Education and Culture was responsible for the funding of the project. The total funding during the years 2005-2007 was approximately 1,150,000 Euros.

The project organized training and produced media education materials. In the nation-wide training sessions, teachers and other educators were trained to learn the basic concepts and working methods of media education and the basics of safe media use. Approximately 95 training sessions were organized and a total of 2,800 professionals were involved in the training. Materials targeted to professional educators were sent

to day-care centers, primary schools, and those responsible for children's morning and afternoon activities. Approximately 9,000 material packages were distributed in year 2006. The materials included pedagogical support to professional educators, Internet resources to support media education at home, and resources for media professionals. Three kinds of printed materials were produced: the exercise book, the media educator's handbook, and film education materials.

The exercise book *Muffe and the Lost Key* included activities that could be implemented by using basic equipment in kindergartens, clubs, and schools. The book was built around a story in which two friends, Milla and Muffe, have an adventure that introduces them to various media tools and media phenomena such as the child as a media consumer, media as a story-teller, emotions and feelings, the different messages of media, and the child as a participant in media culture. An audio CD that included new media-related songs and sonic atmospheres was related to the book. An important area of media education in the book was the world of images in early childhood. It was noted that interpretation and critical analysis of images is a useful exercise even for young children. The material suggested that analysis of the pictures could be implemented by using the picture as an inspiration for writing, and that these stories and pictures could be published, for instance, at a parents' meeting. Through these productions media education could be discussed with parents.

The media educator's handbook *Media Fun!* looked at media education and its concepts from children's points of view. It aimed to improve the media literacy of children, professional educators, and parents through theory and applied exercises that include, for instance, optical toys to illustrate moving images. The book emphasized the joy of collective experience and the importance of creating things oneself. An important starting point of the handbook was that media literacy is practiced not only through analysis, but also through production. The book dealt with themes including stories and films, gaming, mobile phones, safe use of media, and media parenthood. In addition to the handbook, this material contained a documentary film illustrating how small children's media education can be implemented in every day educational work.

The film education material *See, Feel, and Experience!* guided the educator in creating a safe film experience at a movie theatre, and in processing the experience through various exercises. It emphasized that watching a film on a big screen could be a great experi-

ence and an important educational event, and preparation for it is important for the educator. When an educator raises themes that are important to the film through characters or plot, they also help the child to process their feelings safely in the company of an adult.

Program Evaluation

There were two studies related to the Media Muffin Project. The pilot study of the Media Muffin project was implemented by a research team from the University of Tampere in Finland in the spring of 2006. They tested the Media Muffin materials and training prior to implementation with 16 different groups of professional educators and children in two different cities. This pilot study used multiple methods, such as content analysis of the material packages, interviews with the professional educators and children, and participant observations with the pilot groups (Kupiainen et al. 2006). The main finding was that the materials and the training increased the overall awareness related to media education among the adult participants. They began to think about children's safe and non-safe media use, and learned that media can also be a resource for education, not only a threat to children's growth. The awareness of a need to develop media education as a well-planned educational activity in day-care centers increased. The adults also became inspired by media education. In addition to these very positive results, it was noted that in order to achieve a more sustainable position for media education in early childhood education and care, more supportive structures would be needed, such as pedagogical material and networks (Ibid.).

The second study was an evaluation of the results of the first year of the project carried out by researcher Annikka Suoninen from the University of Jyväskylä. The goal of the study was to find out how the Media Muffin materials had been implemented in early childhood education and care and in pre-schools, and at the same time to get information about the general situation of and attitudes related to media education in the field. There were 327 respondents in the survey (Suoninen 2008). According to the results, 70% of the respondents had at least heard about the Media Muffin project. 46% said that they had familiarized themselves with the material, and 39% remembered that the material package had been received in their work unit. 21% of the respondents had used some of the material. All the percentages were higher in pre-schools than in day-care centers. All the respondents who had familiarized

themselves with the materials were very pleased with them. 80 of those respondents thought that using the materials had promoted the implementation of media education in their work unit.

Regarding the general situation and attitudes related to media education in early childhood education and care, most respondents thought that home is the most important place for media education. Pre-school was considered more important for media education than day-care centers in general. The most important reason to implement media education was the idea that adults have to discuss such subjects related to media by which children are bothered. According to the results, the most important themes in media education in early childhood education and care were fact and fiction, frightening content and media violence. Only 22% of the respondents said that media education was a subject that had been discussed when planning the early childhood education and care on a municipal level. Lack of tools, materials, and training were considered the most central obstacles for implementing media education (Suoninen 2008).

The Media Muffin project ended in 2007. In line with the goals of the Media Muffin project, a national guideline for media education in early childhood and care was published in 2008. Additionally, a guide describing the media education themes for pre-school and pre-primary education was published in 2009. A publication called *Media Skills Learning Bath* that describes the development of media skills as a continuum from the first to the ninth and last grade of the elementary school was published in 2011. These publications were funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture and produced by the School Center Club together with a variety of stakeholders such as the Finnish National Board of Education.

The Reform of Legislation for Protecting Minors and Distributing Audiovisual Programs

Another relevant plan of action in Finland that relates directly to the Children and Media Program and media education is the reform of the legislation for protecting minors and distributing audiovisual programs. This entails *the Government proposal to Parliament on the reform of the Act on the Classification of Audiovisual Programs and the Act on the Finnish Board of Film Classification*. The Government has approved the proposal and the new legislation will come into force in January 2012.

Due to the reform, the Finnish Board of Film Classification will transform into the Finnish Centre for Media Education and Audiovisual Programs. The Centre will be the state authority that enforces the Act on Audiovisual Programs. A key task for the Centre will be to promote and co-ordinate media education nationwide together with other authorities and organizations on the sector. The Centre will also obtain certain tasks from the Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority related to the protection of minors in television broadcasting.

The purpose has been to reform the legislation because of the changes in children's media environment. The new system will focus on new kinds of actions that will promote a safe media environment for children such as media education, media literacy, raising the awareness of parents and other educators, and research related to children's media environment. The existing system of inspection and classification of audiovisual programs by the Finnish Board of Film Classification will come to an end. However, the classification of audiovisual programs will remain, and this task will be mainly transferred to the persons working in the service of audiovisual industry and the distributors. The Finnish Centre for Media Education and Audiovisual Programs will educate and control these so called classifiers of audiovisual programs.

Besides the tasks related to media education, distribution of information and promoting research, the Finnish Centre for Media Education and Audiovisual Programs will focus on supervising the market of audiovisual programs by following the distribution. The Centre, for instance, will receive public complaints relating to harmful content.

Consequently, in 2012 there will be a state authority with the task of promoting media education in Finland. Similar authorities already exist in other Nordic and EU countries, such as in Denmark, Sweden and the UK. The activities of the new Finnish authority are currently being planned. An evaluation of the effects of the legislative reform will be delivered to the Education and Culture Committee of the parliament of Finland in Spring 2014.

Conclusion

The Media Muffin Project focused particularly on developing new aspects of media education by opening space for media education in early childhood educa-

tion and care, in primary education, and in morning and afternoon activities for schoolchildren. That could be said to be a pioneering work in Finland as earlier media education initiatives in the country have mainly focused on schools, school-aged children, and young people. The methods of the projects (training and producing materials) and the main content areas (safe media use, children's own media production, film education) seemed to be relevant to the target groups (childcare professionals, pre-school teachers, and young children).

The curriculum-like publications in 2008-2011, which could be seen as an extension to the Media Muffin project, have also had an important impact in that they have created structural support for media education in early childhood education and care, pre-school and schooling more widely. Besides this, an important milestone in Finland was a reform of the National Core Curriculum for Morning and Afternoon Activities for Schoolchildren defined by the Finnish National Board of Education in the beginning of 2011. Media literacy is now one subject in this curriculum alongside, for instance, arts and visual, musical, motional and linguistic expression.

Due to the legislative reform, in turn, there will be an authority responsible for media education and safe media environment for children in Finland. As a whole, this new authority will implement a variety of initiatives mentioned in the Children and Media Program. The authority will have duties, for example, related to distributing information for parents. That could include information about the parental control systems, and this could be implemented at least partly in co-operation with the media industry. The new center could also deal with the international co-operation related to the Safer Internet Programs in the EU. Consequently, the Finnish Centre for Media Education and Audiovisual Programs will be a co-operative body deeded with the field of media education in Finland. However, the results of this reform will be realized only in the future.

There are also a variety of other actions detailed in the Children and Media Program that have already been taken or are being continuously implemented in Finland, for instance, by NGOs with the funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture. These actions include a media education portal (mediaeducation.fi) provided by the Finnish Association on Media Education, and development projects in public libraries and a children's portal (Okariino.fi)². Additionally, other

² See more information on the projects in the publication called Finnish Media Education Policies (2009) or in the Children and Media Newsletter 1/2011 available at: <http://en.mediakasvatus.fi/ajankohtaista/uutiset/children-and-media-newsletter-12011>

governmental sectors have dealt with themes brought forward in the program. The Ministry of Transportation and Communications has, for instance, worked with the topic of digital inclusion. Thus, during the recent years, there have been a variety of stakeholders implementing the actions mentioned in the Children and Media Program.

In order to get current information regarding the situation of media education in early childhood education and care new surveys and research will be needed, not least because of the rapidly changing media environment of young children. The results of the Media Muffin project evaluation studies (Kupiainen et al. 2006; Suoninen 2008) suggest that it takes a lot more than a package of material and some training to embed media education in daily activities of day-care centers and primary schools as well as morning and afternoon activities for schoolchildren. Nevertheless, the effects of raising awareness of and inspiration for media education should not be underestimated.

Currently there is an evaluation going on that is related to a few projects, including in the Children and Media Program (i.e. media education portal, projects in public libraries, media education models in the Sami language and culture). According to the preliminary findings, co-operation between different project actors should be improved in the future. Besides, similar to day-care professionals, more support and maybe structural changes would be needed to get media education embedded in everyday work with public library professionals. I guess that we could also expect results related to the adequate funding of media literacy programs and sustained training for the actors. These appear to be general topics in discussions about media literacy policies alongside the needs for curriculum reforms that take media literacy into consideration (e.g. Yates 2004). What might we have learnt about this example of a policy program and its implementation? Most importantly, development projects can raise awareness and make space for new ideas, but in order to achieve more sustainable changes, more structural actions (legislative reform, curriculum changes) are needed. However, structural changes take time. It is about seven years now since the publishing of the Children and Media Program and it is not until now that media literacy is a subject in the national curriculum for morning and afternoon activities for schoolchildren. Therefore, the modest goal of the Finnish strategy for cultural policy (2009) to give media education a more visible place in

society in 2020 seems to be a wise strategy. One important reform in the future will be the reform of the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education that will take place in 2016.

Additionally, since media education is a policy theme that relates to a variety of sectors in Finland, it has been important to create co-operation with different governmental bodies in order to promote media education. In practice, the Children and Media Program has operated mostly in the field of education, youth and communications policies. It has been in media literacy's favor to promote media education particularly as a part of cultural policy. Cultural policy has a wide scope and therefore the policy has included non-formal learning contexts and community actions, such as morning and afternoon activities for schoolchildren, libraries, civic organizations and media industry (e.g. Camps 2009; Hobbs 2010). If media education had been promoted only strictly as a part of education policy, possibly it would have led to a narrowed idea of media literacy as being only a subject taught in school.

More widely speaking, it has been said that the question of balancing between protection and participation characterizes media education policies in the Western countries (e.g. McGonagle 2011). The Children and Media Program is an example of that kind of policy as well. The prior governmental target has been to protect children from harmful media effects. At the same time, it has been emphasized that since it is in today's media environment impossible only to guard children, it is necessary to strengthen them as media literate actors too.

This kind of empowerment policy also relates to the so-called deregulatory context in which the promotion of media literacy has been said to come to the fore in Europe (e.g. McGonagle 2011, 13). In such a context, educational measures are presented as alternatives to regulation. However, the Finnish legislative reform has not been only de-regulative. Instead, the traditional core measures of protecting children from harmful media effects, such as the classification and labeling of audiovisual programs, has been standardized by the new act on audiovisual programs that will apply to all kind of audiovisual content distributed in Finland (e.g. films, television programs, video and computer games, and on-demand services). In addition, a whole new regulative context for media education that takes into account a wide-ranging idea of media literacy -- safety, communication, creativity and criticality -- has been con-

structed. Thus, instead of presenting educational measures as alternatives to regulation, the Finnish reform has emphasized both regulation and education.

The regulatory emphases on media literacy have been criticized as shifting the onus for the prevention of harm from public institutions to the private sphere (McGonagle 2011). There are aspects in the Children and Media Program and in the legislation reform in Finland that clearly relate to these kinds of questions as well. The responsibilities of parents as main guardians of their children, for instance, have been emphasized in the reform, and therefore the distribution of information for parents has been a key task for the new media education authority. So again, the reform has emphasized both the responsibilities of the private sphere and the duties of the public institutions. Therefore, there has been a proper balance with the potentials and the limitations of media literacy in these media education policies.

There has been only a little research in young children's media environment so far. Therefore, it is quite natural that media education for young children has not yet widely been on the agenda of media literacy efforts, although children and young people more generally have been regular targets of these policies (e.g.

McGonagle 2011). But I would guess that in the future, when the knowledge base of the expanding media environment of young children is strengthening, they will become a central target group in media literacy policies around the world.

I wish to end this article in a vision of a future of media literacy that I think fits in well with the mission of the World Summit on Media for Children and Youth. This is a vision by Jose Manuel Perez Tornero and Tapio Varis who writes (2010, 126-127) that

The challenge of the 21st century is putting communicators, teachers, scientists, authorities, the technology industry, the media and civil society together while understanding the global challenges of media literacy as part of a global education. This means attributing to media competence the enormous role that it has in a world of global communication and knowing how to take advantage of the potential that the ICTs have in order to improve our world. Yet none of this will happen if it is not accepted that this task must be directed by the values and practices of a new humanism that we must all regain and invent. Only this new humanism will lead us to peace.

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Appendix A

Nine Areas of the Children and Media Program, circa 2004

1. Legislation Related to Audiovisual Programs that Violate Criminal Law

Finnish criminal law includes regulation related to the distribution of cruel violence or obscenity with children or animals in films as well as illegal distribution of films to minors.

Areas of development

- The hotline network. A service in the EU countries that people can use in order to report illegal content in the Internet. The national hotlines forward the reports to local police, service provides or a hotline in some other country to handle.
- The regulation of the pornographic film market together with the police and the Finnish Board of Film Classification (FNBF).

2. Legislation Related to Protecting Minors from Harmful Audiovisual Content

According to the Act on the Classification of Audiovisual Programs (2001), it is illegal to show on screen or otherwise distribute audiovisual programs to minors before the FNBF has approved the distribution. The FNBF would classify an age limit of 7, 11, 13, 15 or 18 for the program. These provisions do not relate to programs in television, but they do include on-demand services. With respect to video and computer games a pan-European game classification system PEGI had been applied.

Areas of development

- Promoting the development of the PEGI system
- Involvement in European and international co-operation (e.g. UNESCO)
- Clarifying the necessity of a possible legislative reform due to changes in the distribution channels of audiovisual programs
- Examining the possibility of reforming the duties of the FNBF in relation to the protection of minors in the changing media environment. The new duties would include measures related to media education, research and distribution of information. The duties of the Finnish Communication Regulatory Authority in relation to the protection of minors in television broadcasting would be transferred to the FNBF, whose new name will be the Media Content Centre.

3. Research and Distribution of Information

The legislation for protecting minors as well as other themes related to the field were poorly known by the Finnish people.

Areas of development

- Raising awareness in relation to harmful media content
- Promoting networking in the area
- Building a children and media web-portal
- A Children and Media forum be organized once a year in order to improve co-operation within the sector
- Supporting research related to children's media usage and harmful effects
- Involving with the European programs in the area of safe Internet use

4. New Aspects of Media Education

Media education has been developed in the Finnish school system since the 1970s when the so called mass media education model was introduced. In the present national curriculum for elementary school from year 2004 there is a thematic entity called communication and media skills. With respect to implementing media education in school practices, development in the upper secondary school was the most prominent

Areas of development

Teacher education

- Media education in early childhood education and care
- Media education as a content area in morning and afternoon activities in schools
- Civic organizations and universities as key actors in the field
- A variety of other potential actors implementing media education such as youth workers, libraries, public service television, regional film centers and culture services targeted to children.
- An institute for media education research
- An advisory board for media education under the Ministry of Education and Culture

5. The Responsibilities of Media Industry

A rapid increase of Internet usage among Finnish people.

Areas of development

- Involving with the EU programs related to protecting minors in the Internet environment
- Promoting self- and co-regulation and the use and awareness of filtering systems provided by the Internet service providers.
- Promoting the awareness of the need for protecting children by the actors in media industry

6. Filtering Systems Usage

Filtering programs that filtered harmful content such as adult-only programs, nakedness, sexual themes, hate, violence, racism, horror, cults, drugs etc. in categories such as Internet games, chats, discussion forums, communication tools and peer-to-peer programs were introduced.

Areas of development

- Promoting filtering systems as a way to control harmful content
- Follow-up on user experiences and developing further filtering systems in schools and libraries
- Promoting the distribution of information on filtering systems, especially to parents.

7. Production of Quality Content for Children

Production of versatile and good quality content for children was seen as a positive option among the proposed measures in the Children and Media Programme. Television was considered a central media for the children. Promoting the production of children's movies had already been an established agenda for cultural policy.

Areas of development

- The Finnish public service broadcaster YLE as a key actor in producing quality content for children.
- Producing video and computer games targeted particularly at girls
- Building child- and youth-centered web-services

8. Digital Inclusion

Media, in particular the Internet, would bring to children's and other people's lives a variety of possibilities, for instance, a possibility to gain knowledge and self-expression. All children, regardless of their place of residence or the social status of the family, should have a right to Internet access.

Areas of development

- Promoting universal access to Internet by providing broadband Internet connections and digital television broadcasting all over Finland.
- In particular schools, day-care centers and libraries should have appropriate equipment.

9. Supporting Parents and Family

Media has a central role in children's every day life. Watching television is a common family practice that has positive influences. Playing video and computer games might cause trouble in families. Existing survey data told that parents are typically able to restrict media usage among children under 12 years old. Parents need help and support with relation to education in the changing media environment.

Areas of development

- Promoting parents' possibilities to the use of filtering systems and awareness related to the theme, for example, in child welfare clinics and parent's meetings in schools.
- Special attention to children at risk and research related to media addictions.