

FOR RELEASE

2nd April 2009

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS CHALLENGES FOR MEDIA LITERACY PROMOTION IN IRELAND

A research report issued this week by the Dublin Institute of Technology's Centre for Social and Educational Research (CSER) has made a series of recommendations regarding the development of public policy for media literacy in Ireland. Commissioned by the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI) through its Media Research Bursary Scheme, and undertaken by Dr. Brian O'Neill and Dr. Cliona Barnes, the report's recommendations have been issued taking into account the provisions that have been made for public media literacy promotion in the Broadcasting Bill, 2008. The Bill is currently at report stage in the Oireachtas. The proposed legislation requires that the new broadcasting regulator, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) will undertake activities to promote media literacy, including co-operation with broadcasters, educationalists and other relevant people or groups.

A key part of the research undertaken by the CSER was to seek public attitudes towards media literacy in Ireland. In a series of focus groups the researchers found that the level of skills and experience with different types of media varied greatly.

Levels of experience with new interactive media (i.e. interactive television, Internet, participation in virtual communities) also varied considerably dependent on age, interest, and access to technology and infrastructure.

On the issue of critical media awareness; that is the degree to which members of the public display a critical attitude to media as regards both quality and accuracy of content; the research demonstrated informal awareness. Similarly the research underscored a limited understanding of issues of media ownership and control and its implications for citizens and consumers.

Commenting on the research findings Dr. Brian O'Neill said: 'It is clear that media literacy is something that affects everyone. We all need to be more media literate to make sense of the major changes happening in today's information-rich world. Teachers and educators have a major role to play, but media industries must also play their part in ensuring there is a better public understanding of the issues and challenges'.

The report makes a series of recommendations, including the establishment of an Irish media literacy expert group to advise on definitions, strategies and new developments in relation to media literacy.

The report also stresses the importance of a partnership approach and the involvement of a diverse range of interests as key to the successful implementation of media literacy promotion. It argues that media literacy education needs to encompass both formal education settings as well as a host of adult learning environments.

Commenting on the research recommendations, Michael O’Keeffe Chief Executive of the BCI said “The research undertaken by the CSER and funded by the BCI clearly outlines the importance of having a clear definition and understanding of what media literacy is from a policy development perspective. One of the major challenges facing the BAI will be in determining degrees of media literacy, in order to develop an integrated approach to its promotion in Ireland. It will be important for BAI to ensure that as new services and platforms develop, so too will the requirement for measures to be put in place to ensure that consumers and users are informed and better enabled to cope in an increasingly complex and dynamic environment.”

A full copy of the research report is available to download from the Commission’s website www.bci.ie/research_reports/MRFS.html

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