



Association for Media Education in Scotland

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MEDIA EDUCATION AND FILM EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND

Summary

This paper proposes that significant changes are essential to develop both media education and film education in Scotland's schools, for the benefit of our young people. The influence and power of media for good and ill — politically, culturally, economically, socially — has grown ever greater through the explosion of media, especially social media. The moving image, with its combination of images, sounds, words and music, is arguably the most powerful form of communication humans have ever developed; it is also a rich and diverse artform with a global history. However, despite media education's presence in Scotland since the 1980s, and despite Curriculum for Excellence's recognition of media literacy and film literacy within its future-proofed definition of literacy, media and film education remain on the margins in schools. This is preventing our young people, our schools and teachers, from developing their full potential.

The Association for Media Education in Scotland (AMES) proposes two achievable steps towards addressing these issues:

1. Recognition and support for teacher professionalism in media education, including the development of a Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Professional Development Award (PDA) in Media Education, and of online resources to support teachers, schools and teacher education.
2. The development by SQA of a non-vocational qualification in Film, from National 3 to Advanced Higher (SCQF level 7), similar to Northern Ireland's Moving Image Arts (MIA) GCSE/AS/A2 (see below), distinct from Media in both its discipline (Expressive Arts rather than Social Science) and its subject of study (moving image 'art' ie principally feature film, short film, documentary, animation rather than all media).

1. Media Education in Scotland: in theory

There have always been individual teachers dedicated to media education (especially film) in Scottish schools. But the collective effort to promote media education in Scotland started in 1980 with the formation of the Forrester Media Group, a group of teachers and FE lecturers from across Scotland. Assisted by the Scottish Film Council, this led to the formation in 1983 of the Association for Media Education in Scotland (AMES). Since then AMES has held annual conferences and published the *Media Education Journal* twice a year. Its members serve as SQA qualification designers, examiners and markers. AMES also lobbies and cooperates with bodies such as Education Scotland, SQA, Creative Scotland and Ofcom on behalf of media education. Notwithstanding our efforts, media education and film education remain marginal in schools, despite their centrality in young people's lives, and despite CfE's definition of literacy, which sets out Scottish education's commitment to universal provision of media education:

In defining literacy for the 21st century we must consider the changing forms of language which our children and young people will experience and use.

Accordingly, our definition takes account of factors such as the speed with which information is shared and the ways it is shared. The breadth of our definition is intended to 'future proof' it. Within Curriculum for Excellence, therefore, literacy is defined as:

*the set of skills which allows an individual to engage fully in society and in learning, through the different forms of language, and the range of texts, which society values and finds useful.*¹

The examples CfE gives include the full gamut of media, including 'film, games and TV programmes.' This exemplary commitment to media education for all (which contrasts sharply with its excision from England's definition of literacy) was followed in SQA's surveys of literacy for the Government in 2012, 2014 and 2016, which used film clips as test items in all schools; it is also reflected in SQA National and Higher English, which state that English has to be studied in the 'contexts of literature, language and media'.

¹ [Literacy Across Learning: Principles and Practice](#)

2. Media Education: in practice ...

So far, so good; but what is the reality? We know from a wide range of sources that excellent media education is delivered in some schools, but it is patchy and critically dependent on the commitment of senior management and expertise of teachers, and often disappears if a key member of staff leaves. Comprehensive data is not available for pre-school, primary and S1-S3, but, using examination data as proxy, we can draw some fairly clear conclusions:

- Few candidates opt for Film and TV Drama in the Critical Reading paper of National 5 and Higher English (8% in N5, 6% in Higher)², indicating that only around 10% of teachers of English feel confident in teaching film or think it important.
- Tables 1-8 (see Appendix below) compare exam presentations in all media qualifications (Joint Council for Qualifications subjects Media, Film & TV, and SQA Media) across the four UK nations in 2016, using English exam numbers as a benchmark. The ratio of Media to English (aggregated across all levels) in Northern Ireland, Wales and England is 16.1%, compared to 3.2% in Scotland: students in the other three nations are 5 times more likely to study a media-related subject.
- The differences are even starker at the higher university entrance levels: a ratio of Media to English of 23.7% (AS level in the three nations) compared to 2.9% (SQA Higher); and 33.2% (A level in the three nations) compared to zero in Scotland (Advanced Higher Media is unavailable).³
- It is also worth noting that the number of colleges offering National and Higher exam-assessed Media qualifications has declined, the likely cause being current college Performance Indicators which are a disincentive to offering National 5 and Higher Media. Again, this can disadvantage college students wishing to apply for university entry.

Clearly, young people in Scotland are severely disadvantaged compared with those from the other nations when competing for university entry to film and media courses. This is borne out by reports from universities and art colleges (see below in Section 4: National & Higher Qualifications in Film?).

There is also a concern about the quality and relevance of the National and Higher courses in Media. For example, the newly revised National 5 Media course makes no mention of the internet, digital media and social media and the issues that arise from these. Given the immersion of young people in digital and social media (and the motivational potential of this in the classroom), and given the synergies that exist between 'traditional media' and 'new media', this seems an inexcusable oversight. One hopes that this will be addressed in the revision of Higher Media.

² Figures provided 21 March 2017 by Emma Bratchell, SQA Qualifications Manager, English, ESOL and Media

³ Compare tables 2 and 6, and tables 3 and 7 in Appendix

3. Teacher Education and support

Most trainee teachers receive little media education, typically one day. Some teachers embark on teaching SQA Media with little knowledge or experience resulting in very low attainment rates in some centres. Particularly worrying is the drop in the 2017 pass rate for Higher Media (from 67.5% to 59.8%).⁴ A range of teacher qualifications are required to address this skills gap, up to and including Masters level, but, recognising the challenges at Masters level, AMES has approached SQA to develop Professional Development Awards in media education which could be picked up and delivered by any competent centre, including universities. SQA are now in consultation with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) to take this forward.

Another way to increase the availability and quality of media education in schools could be to employ current or former FE lecturers with experience of HN Creative Industries courses, many of whom also have experience of delivering National and Higher English. However, as the TQFE qualification is not valid in schools, this is currently not an option.

Poor infrastructural support for media education in Scotland extends also to the lack of national online resources for media education, designed for the Scottish context. While a wide range of online resources continue to be developed and made available online for film education (sponsored by Scottish Screen and successor body Creative Scotland), there are no similar resources for media education. This needs to be addressed alongside teacher education for media.

⁴ <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/63001.8312.html>

4. National & Higher Qualifications in Film?

Alone among the four nations, Scotland has no film/moving image-specific qualification. The WJEC's Film Studies GCSE and A level has been available since the 1980s, and CCEA's Moving Image Arts (MIA) GCSE and AS/A2 since 2004. Northern Ireland's MIA is of particular interest, being framed as expressive art – 70% practical/creative, 30% online exam – and drawing ever increasing takers among students and schools: 1812 candidates in Northern Ireland in 2016; 100 schools offering AS level; pass rates at C or above of 86% at AS level, and 90% at A2. Universities and Art Colleges offering degrees in film (including Scottish institutions) consistently report on the strength of applicants who have studied Moving Image Arts:

The numbers now appearing on our degree with [MIA] in their profile for entry is highly significant in a number of ways. Our Film Studies 1st year this year looks as though over 75% of them have studied MIA at some point... [MIA] may well be a significant factor in the success of the programme here also, with the quality of students getting higher each year.⁵

While this quote comes from Queen's in Belfast, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) has also noted the strength year-on-year of MIA applicants to its BA Filmmaking, and of their subsequent progress on the programme. Recognising the disadvantage the qualification deficit creates for Scottish applicants, RCS has developed its own Foundation Certificate in Film at SCQF level 6/7 which it will offer later in 2017, to help plug the gap and prepare more young people from Scotland for the course at RCS.

CCEA's Moving Image Arts was trialled in Scotland during 2015-16 at GCSE and AS level by Screen Education Edinburgh. Five young people from disadvantaged backgrounds took the AS level and achieved 3 'A' grades, one 'B' and one 'C'. Three secured places on Napier University's BA (Hons) Film, one a job in post-production, and another entered Edinburgh College. Screen Education Edinburgh has 16 students studying MIA 'AS' level during 2016-17, and other informal education institutions will also offer the qualification in Aberdeen, Glasgow and Inverness during 2017-18.

The success stories above provide abundant evidence for the value of MIA, but the trials of MIA in Scotland do not provide a comprehensive solution for our education system, since they are exceptionally funded for trial purposes only, MIA is not a harmonious 'fit' with SQA qualifications, and would not 'count' in schools in Scotland. Instead, an SQA qualification in Film is essential, from National 3 to Advanced Higher, to give young people in Scotland's schools and colleges equal opportunities to develop their creative potential in film and the moving image. It is important to stress the non-vocational nature of such a qualification, which should not be narrowly skills-focused, and which would sit in the Expressive Arts alongside Art and Design, Dance, Drama, Music and Photography.

⁵ Declan Keeney, Head of School of Film Studies and Production, Queen's University Belfast (personal correspondence with Scott Donaldson, Head of Film Education, Creative Scotland, 2017)

Indeed, it is clear to see how such a qualification would complement, support and motivate the other Expressive Arts. It would also complement rather than overlap Media, whose social science approach and much broader field of study clearly distinguishes it. In 2015, AMES carried out a survey regarding the development of such a qualification and found support from 48 schools and 7 colleges, indicating that demand is there in the system.

Finally, notwithstanding its non-vocational nature, the proposed qualification would give a much wider range of young people the opportunity to discover if they wish to further develop their interests and career in the moving image. The screen industries are renowned for their lack of diversity, difficulty of entry, and inequality of opportunity, comprehensively evidenced in Creative Scotland's 2017 report *Equality Matters*, which cited the lack of a qualification similar to MIA as a major contributory factor:

Critically, entry into the Screen Sector depends on prior opportunities to access skills and knowledge. Scotland's ... approach to moving image education and film literacy is... distinct in that it recognises the moving image as a language. However, not all teachers or schools have the confidence nor experience to accord it this prominence. Furthermore, without a specific national qualification in film or the moving image, the progression routes available elsewhere in the UK are missing in Scotland. This limits the numbers and diversity of young people transiting to the next level, be that further and higher education, training or employment.⁶

Meanwhile, the growth of the screen industries in Scotland has placed severe pressure on crews and skills here, resulting in crews and specialist skills being brought in from outwith Scotland. Major skills gaps have been identified, and a qualification similar to MIA could undoubtedly make a significant contribution in the longer term to addressing those gaps, as it has in Northern Ireland.

5. Conclusion

AMES hopes that Scotland's education system will pursue with renewed vigour the future-proofing approach CFE took to literacy, and help us develop these proposals. Creative Scotland is known to have made separate representations to SQA regarding a 'Film' qualification, and has provided some support for teacher and resource development, and for AMES. However, its resources and influence are limited, and we hope that the Scottish Government will take a positive interest in these proposals.

Rick Instrell (ames.scot@gmail.com) on behalf of AMES, 9 August 2017

Thanks to Scott Donaldson, head of Film Education at Creative Scotland for comments. Any errors are the responsibility of the author.

⁶ http://www.creativescotland.com/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/37935/Equality-Matters-Screen-EDI-Review-FINAL.pdf

Appendix

Tables showing comparative presentation rates in 2016 for non-vocational media-related qualifications using subject English as a baseline.

Comparison of 2016 UK Media/Film/TV Studies presentations with subject English

Table 1: GCSE entries					Table 5: SQA National 3,4,5 entries plus aggregate National				
Subject	All	England	Wales	NI	Subject	National 3	National 4	National 5	Total National
English	513285	455860	35323	22102	English	2153	18385	45813	66351
Media	55228	51209	2248	1771	Media	264	1074	889	2227
M/E ratio	10.8%	11.2%	6.4%	8.0%	M/E ratio	12.3%	5.8%	1.9%	3.4%
Table 2: AS Level entries					Table 6: SQA Higher Entries				
Subject	All	England	Wales	NI	Subject	Higher			
'Old' AS English	95538	88732	3994	2812	English	36345			
'New' AS English	71720	71471	61	188	Media	1055			
Totals	167258	160203	4055	3000	M/E ratio	2.9%			
Media	39621	36515	1496	1610					
M/E ratio	23.7%	22.8%	36.9%	53.7%					
Table 3: A level entries					Table 7: SQA Advanced Higher Entries				
Subject	All	England	Wales	NI	Subject	Higher			
English	84710	79072	3490	2148	English	2303			
Media	28140	25693	1197	1250	Media (not available)	0			
M/E ratio	33.2%	32.5%	34.3%	58.2%	M/E ratio	0.0%			
Table 4: Aggregate of Tables 1,2,3 (GCSE + AS Level + A Level)					Table 8: Aggregate of Tables 5,6,7 (N3+N4+N5+H)				
Subject	All	England	Wales	NI	Subject	Total			
English	765253	695135	42868	27250	English	102696			
Media	122989	113417	4941	4631	Media	3282			
M/E ratio	16.1%	16.3%	11.5%	17.0%	M/E ratio	3.2%			

Note 1: The tables show comparative presentation rates for non-vocational media-related qualifications using subject English as a baseline. M/E ratio is the ratio of Media: English presentations for England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Note 2: JCQ statistics aggregate Media Studies, Film Studies and TV Studies numbers. They are referred to as 'Media' below to allow comparison with Scotland.

Note 3: SQA only offers a Media qualification

Note 4: Data has been extracted from Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) [2016 diet statistics](#) and SQA [2016 diet statistics](#).