

# Finnish Media Education

## Promoting Media and Information Literacy in Finland

In Finland, **media and information literacy (MIL)** is seen as civic competence; important to every citizen from an early age. The term **media education** (*mediakasvatus* in Finnish) refers to the educational actions promoting MIL and the skills related to it.

Take a look at how Finnish media education is promoted through **national policies** and in various **organizations** and **projects**. Get a taste of a few shining examples based on joint national efforts, and see a brief history of how Finland has developed into a forerunner in media education.

**M**edia education and its benefits are seen in a very broad sense in Finnish policies. Media education enhances versatile literacy competencies, and thanks to media education, people in all age groups possess better skills for tackling everyday life, participating in society and developing as individuals.

Ensuring a stronger position for media education is one of the strategic aims of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Ministry promotes media literacy through allocating resources, providing relevant information and developing legislation, including educational, cultural, youth and art policies.

Other governmental bodies support MIL as well, for example, the Ministry of Justice addresses MIL from the viewpoint of inclusion and as part of a democratic education. The Finnish Competition and Consumer Agency works from the perspective of consumer education, producing media related material based on consumer awareness information and education.

## **Good Media Literacy – National Policy Guidelines**

In 2013, the Ministry of Education and Culture prepared cultural policy guidelines to promote media literacy among children and adolescents. These guidelines have been designed in collaboration with organizations from different parts of society to cater to a wide range of stakeholders in media education.

The four goals of media education in Finland for 2013–2016, from the policy guidelines:

- *Everyday media education is child and adolescent-centred, and of high quality.*
- *Sustainable structures promoting media literacy are achieved through legislation, financial resources, and national and local level steering.*
- *Activities and various stakeholders in media education profile themselves, networks are reinforced, and new partnerships are created.*
- *Finland plays an active role in global media education activities.*

The importance of MIL and skills related to it are included in other policies, such as:

- Finland's Digital Agenda 2011–2020
- Policies for Audiovisual Culture
- Public Library Policy 2015
- Child and Youth Policy Programme 2012–2015.

## KAVI – The Finnish Media Education Authority



Finland is one of very few countries with a governmental media education authority. The National Audiovisual Institute (KAVI), with its Department for Media Education and Audiovisual Media (MEKU), has a legal task to promote media education, children's media skills and the development of a safe media environment for children. MEKU also supervises the provision of audiovisual programmes. KAVI is a subordinate of the Ministry of Education and Culture and acts in cooperation with stakeholders.

# Media Education Goes National

In Finland, the importance of media and information literacy is emphasized in several national policies, and media education is promoted by a governmental authority. National level goals for media education were drawn up in 2013.

The background is a vibrant green with a textured, watercolor-like appearance. A map of Finland is faintly visible in the center. Scattered around the map are various white icons: a musical note, a speech bubble, an envelope, a hand holding a pen, a sun with a face, a computer monitor, and a pair of glasses. The overall theme is media and education.

# Media Education in Finnish Educational System

The Finnish educational system has often been seen as one of the best in the world. All children and young people have an equal opportunity, free of charge, for a basic education, and the teachers are highly educated. Aspects of media and information literacy are connected to several different subjects studied at the schools.

**Communities, schools and teachers in Finland have a lot of freedom in planning educational actions. This creates opportunities in teaching and learning in locally meaningful ways.**

**P**romoting media and information literacies starts at a very early age in the Finnish education system. National Core Curricula for Pre-Primary Education and Basic Education include transversal competence areas called Multiliteracy and Information and communication technologies (ICT). The curriculum for Upper Secondary Education includes cross-curricular themes Multiliteracy and Media as well as Technology and Society. Competences related to MIL are practiced across different subjects and contents of curricula as part of these wide competence areas.

In these competence areas, MIL plays an important part. For example Multiliteracy highlights the importance of multimodality, and the critical abilities both to interpret and to produce different media. In the curricula, ICT is seen both as the target of and as a tool for education. In the competence area of ICT, information skills and exploratory and creative learning are emphasized. Media culture is seen as an important resource and environment for learning across the disciplines.

In the curricula for Vocational Upper Secondary Education, media and information literacy competences are mainly integrated in mother tongue and ICT in mathematic and science subjects. Special attention is paid to work related media competences.

The Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) has supported the development of MIL and media education pedagogies through resource allocation and

developing legislation in this sector. The Finnish National Board of Education, a state institution under the authority of the MoEC, is responsible for curricula development.

## **Higher Education and Media Education Research**

Master's degree programs in media education are available in two Finnish universities, the University of Lapland and University of Tampere, which both have professorships in media education. Additionally, smaller scale study modules in media education are available in several Finnish universities and universities of applied science.

The field of media education research is multidisciplinary and covers a great variety of topics. Related research is being done in the majority of Finnish universities, most often in the departments of educational sciences, but also in humanities and social sciences, for example.

Overall, the research has focused on media education practises and theories, and media and the usage of media from different theoretical perspectives. Most often, the focus of the research in Finland has been on how information and communications technology support the teaching-studying-learning processes\*.

\* *Media Education Research in Finland: A Literature Review*  
Pekkala, Pääjärvi, Palsa, Korva & Löfgren 2013.  
[www.kavi.fi/meku/julkaisut](http://www.kavi.fi/meku/julkaisut)

Significant media educational work takes place all over the country, and Finland benefits from a rich variety of operators in the field. There are almost 100 different organisations promoting MIL in Finland. This is in addition to media education carried out in formal education, youth work, libraries and other public cultural services.

# The Many Players in the Field of Media Education



**T**he large number of organisations contributing to media education is impressive for a small country like Finland.

Most often, organisations are promoting media and information literacy as a part of their work, and integrating it into their specific areas of expertise.

**Here is a summary of the main organisations promoting media education:**

The *National Audiovisual Institute* under the *Ministry of Education and Culture* is the Finnish media educational authority, with a legal task to promote media education.

Among governmental agencies, the *National Board of Education* is a key actor with its role in developing education in Finland. In addition, the *Ministry of Justice* and the *Finnish Competition and Consumer Agency* contribute to MIL as part of their duties.

The *Finnish Society on Media Education* is a key organisation among NGOs in the media education field, especially in bridging the gap between research and practical activities. Several other operators in media education are also members of this society.

The *Finnish Library Association* is very active in the field of media education as well. Libraries, in general, have been major players in areas such as game education and supporting elderly people with media related skills.

*Child and youth organisations* promote media literacy to ensure the welfare and participation of children and adolescents.

From the perspective of MIL, the most active national services of youth work are the *Development Centre of Youth Information and Counselling* (Koordinaatti), the *National Development Centre for Online*



*Youth Work* (Verke), and the *Finnish Youth Research Network*.

Active NGOs include, for example, the *Mannerheim League for Child Welfare*, *Development Centre Opinkirjo*, *Save the Children Finland* and the *Finnish Parents' League*. NGOs often have strong regional networks, which is very important for Finland as a sparsely populated country with long distances.


**Organisations promoting art and culture** have been very active and important operators in the field of media education for decades. The national network of children's culture centres brings together a number of organisations that have media education in their regional activities.

**Film education**, especially, has a long and continuous history in Finland. For example, *Koulukino* (School Cinema Association) and the *Media Education Centre Metka*

are promoting film education as part of media education. The *National Audiovisual Institute* enhances film education and the status of Finnish audiovisual culture as part of its legal duties.

**Promoting media literacy** is also becoming more widespread in **media companies and associations**. The *Finnish National Broadcasting Company* (YLE) has provided media educational projects and materials for several years, but many private companies are also active in supporting and providing media education.

The *Finnish Newspaper Association* has a long history of media education, and the *Federation of the Finnish Media Industry*, *Finnmedia*, has chosen the development of the media literacy of children and adolescents as its strategic and societal goal.



Finnish MIL experts have an active role as international co-operators in terms of research, practise and policy development. MIL is promoted in Nordic, European and global levels, for example via projects coordinated by The European Union, The Council of Europe and UNESCO. Don't hesitate to contact Finnish professionals when looking for MIL partnerships!

# Teamwork: The Best Practice of Finnish Media Education

In the broad and versatile field of Finnish Media Education, there are simply too many great models to choose from as examples of best practices. Nevertheless, it's easy to name one feature that many good practises have in common: cooperation between different organisations and actors. Here are some successful examples of Finnish Media Education practises based on joint efforts.



**Media Literacy Week** The aim of the annual MLW in February is to raise awareness and promote the importance of media literacy and media education. Approximately 40 organizations (covering ministries, governmental agencies, telecom operators, data security companies, media companies and NGO's) are engaged in the MLW every year. Themes, campaigns, awareness materials and events for MLW are planned in co-operation with participating stakeholders. The MLW also encourages schools and other local organizations to arrange events of their own. The National Audiovisual Institute carries the main responsibility for Media Literacy Week, but it is a joint effort of all participating organizations.

[www.mediataitoviikko.fi](http://www.mediataitoviikko.fi)

**National Games Day** The NGD consists of a group of events that discuss the merits, meanings and influences games can have on players. This day also promotes fact-based public debate about digital games, and encourages children and adults to play together. Activities during the week leading up to the NGD in November are organized by public libraries, schools, youth centres, museums and other organisations all around the country. The NGD is coordinated by the Finnish Game Educators' Network, which includes professionals from governmental agencies, media companies, municipalities and NGOs.

[www.pelipaiva.fi](http://www.pelipaiva.fi)

**Media Education Forum for Professionals** The annual Media Education Forum in October is a national meeting place for researchers, decision-makers, governmental officers, and all other professionals working with issues related to media education. The forum aims to support sector-wide partnerships and co-operation within the field and discusses promoting media education in Finland. The Forum is organized by the National Audiovisual Institute.

### **From the Grassroots Level to Mainstream Media –The Youth Voice**

**Editorial Board** The Youth Voice Editorial Board works in the metropolitan area as a news producing group delivering material to different media. The aim is to support young people in producing media content, and to activate and enable young people to have public discussions in the media about issues which are important to them. Young people in the Editorial Board are trained to write articles and produce TV programmes with the help of professionals and leading journalists. Cooperation with organisations such as the National Broadcasting Company (YLE) and the biggest national newspaper (Helsingin Sanomat) guarantees visibility in the mainstream media. This media and democracy educational work was rewarded with the Democracy Prize by The Ministry of Justice in 2012.

**Twenty Years of Good Practice – Newspaper Week** Newspaper Week is a week of cooperation between newspapers and schools, during which the Finnish Newspaper Association's member newspapers supply schools and kindergartens with free copies of their publications. These newspaper materials can be used in different ways, depending on different subjects. The fundamental idea of the Newspaper Week is to provide all schoolchildren with the opportunity to become familiar with newspapers. Together, the association and member newspapers direct, monitor and develop the wide range of events held during the week in February of each year. The Newspaper Week was arranged for the first time in 1994.

**Stay Informed about Finnish Media Education!** The Finnish Society on Media Education provides a portal of national and international media educational issues and publishes a newsletter (also in English). The portal and newsletter provide information on the latest projects, events and research going on in Finland.

[www.mediaeducation.fi](http://www.mediaeducation.fi)

# From Mass Media to the Digital Age

A Brief Look at the History of Media Education in Finland

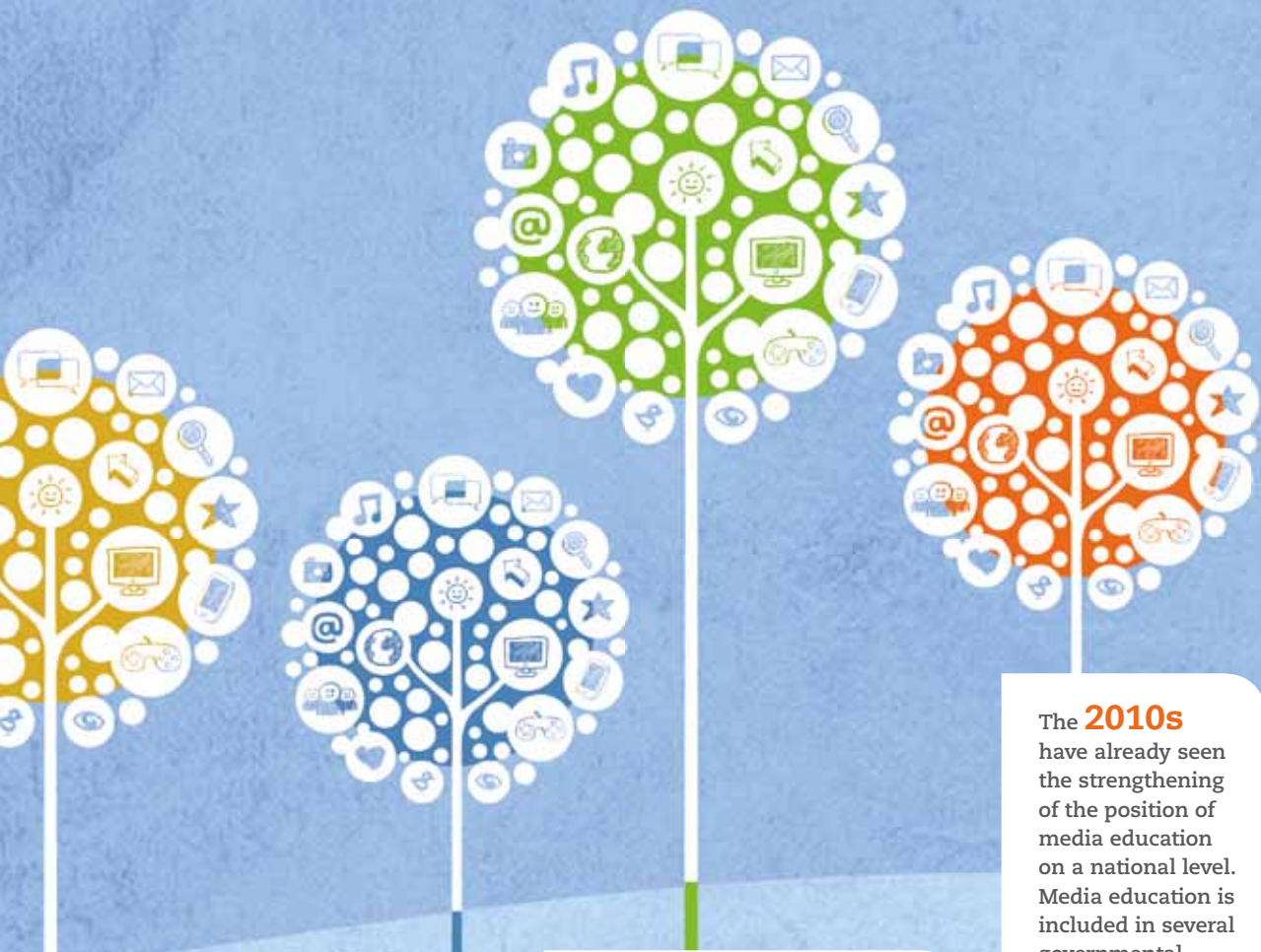


In the **1950s**, questions about mass communication and, especially, the effects of films on the individual and on society were discussed both academically and in public. Educational approaches regarding films were often protective or emphasized the distinction between 'bad' entertainment and propaganda, on the one hand, and 'good' art, on the other.

During the **1960s**, the winds of liberation shaped media education. In art education, themes like war, sex and equality were scrutinised by using materials from mass media and popular culture. Television entered Finnish households.

**1970s** began a new, more systematic era in Finnish (mass) media education. The observation and interpretation of media, critical and selective "adoption", and understanding the modes of expression and narratives of information technology were called for. This approach was implemented in the comprehensive school curricular principles for the first time in 1972.

The different phases of Finnish media education have, for their part, contributed to the development and identity of Finland as a nation. Educating the masses has played a vital role in building the participatory citizenship of Finland. Today, mobile and digital cultures are breaking new ground in media education.



The **1980s** saw the rise of new kinds of audiovisual media, such as Music Television and home videos. Media education had to answer to the needs of a new generation and youth movement, and a powerful perspective entered media education through media culture research.

In the **1990s** the focus of media education turned from mass media to communication, including more aspects of individual expression and production. Computers, the everyday use of the internet, as well as mobile phones affected society and media education. The use of communication and information technology and virtual learning environments became more and more common in educational institutions.

The **new millennium** both expanded and fragmented the field of media education. Its importance was recognized more strongly at the governmental level, and Finland became one of the pioneering countries for promoting media literacy among young children. The NGO Finnish Society on Media Education, was founded by researchers and practitioners to support and develop the field. In research, children's and young people's relationships with media were highlighted. Media education became less bound by certain technologies, even though the use of the internet and social media was widely discussed.

**What's next?** The hot topics right now include the growing significance of media in people's lives, through trends like mobile media technologies, and the accelerating digitalisation and media convergence. The breakthrough of digital games as "everyman's media" calls for game education. The need for media education among the adult population, and especially the elderly, is growing rapidly. Research on the impacts of media education is gaining more interest as well.

The **2010s** have already seen the strengthening of the position of media education on a national level. Media education is included in several governmental policies. Successful media education activities enhance the well-being and participation opportunities of all, especially children and young people. A governmental media education authority was founded under the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2012.

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