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"This is a manifesto, not an academic text" (Buckingham, 2019, p. 119)

One of academia's preeminent scholars on media literacy education and young people's interactions with electronic media, David Buckingham has authored, co-authored, or edited thirty books, and published more than 220 articles and book chapters. That said, his latest offering, *The Media Education Manifesto*, is a provocative, accessible call-to-arms. This short, reader-friendly text is a personal statement built on a lifetime of research and educational experience that presents a new vision for media education and how it should be approached to prepare students for 21st-Century life. The book is written with passion, expertise, and determination. Buckingham clearly and precisely expounds upon the history, both political and educational, of media literacy/education in the UK, while also describing how these insights could be used more globally.

Ultimately, Buckingham's manifesto calls for the adoption of media education as a basic requirement for young people today. He dedicates the first half of his book to positioning the central tenets of the manifesto within the larger context of the field and utilizes the latter half of the text to identify principles that define his conceptualization of media education. By incorporating compelling and timely case studies (i.e., fake news and online propaganda, cyberbullying/hate speech, and self-representation online), Buckingham successfully demonstrates how his new pedagogical approach can foster critical thinking through a directed focus on media discourse.

The first half of the book sets the context and problematizes humanity's relationship to technology. Buckingham sets out to show how these relationships have seemingly begun to coalesce into binary positions within the wider cultural consciousness. He suggests that the appeal of cyber-utopian claims, like "technology will set us all free" (Buckingham, 2019, p. 20), are based on technological deterministic views that posit technology and media as the source of new opportunities for creative expression to complement, or even enhance, our daily lives. By contrast, he demonstrates how the opposite view perceives technology and media as a negative force based on its dangerous inherent risks and potential to cause harm to young people. Buckingham concludes that these positions have led to a view of media education that attempts to straddle the line between the two positions by striving to maximize technologies benefit for students, while teaching them about and mitigating the risks.

Buckingham argues that these deterministic approaches reflect a shallow engagement with media that maintains artificial and unproductive social boundaries between technology and users. Ultimately, Buckingham believes that this leads teachers to limit their teaching of digital, 21st-

Century skills to: a) Digital culture risk awareness training (defensive or protectionist approach); and b) counter-propaganda for "political inoculation" (demystifying media/fake news education); or c) critical thinking through media analysis (Buckingham, 2019, pp.65-68).

Buckingham rejects this framework of media education, suggesting that it ignores the context and user when conversing about technology's influence. He points out that risks and benefits associated with young people's use of media are more productively viewed as interconnected; young people who most frequently engage with media are the ones who will most enjoy the benefits while simultaneously also being the ones most at risk. Yet, this interconnection is frequently superseded by the deterministic approach in current media education practice. One potential reason identified by Buckingham for this disconnection is the fact that educators themselves fail to take account of the larger networked world in a comprehensive, coherent or critical way. For Buckingham, recognition of the bigger picture rests heavily upon one's ability to critically recognize mediation at work: "(I)n a world where almost everything is mediated, it is difficult to identify where the media begin and end" (Buckingham, 2019, p. 52).

Media is everywhere and Buckingham's focus on its influence stems from the view of mediation (alternatively, "mediatization") as an agent of social and cultural change (Hjarvard, 2008; Krotz, 2007 as cited in Hjarvard, 2008; Shulz; 2004). Recent scholarship on mediation/mediatization, like the work of Andreas Hepp (2019) in *Deep Mediatization*, has attempted to expose just how influential digital media has become in the re-figuration of society, which includes focusing on media's profound impact on infrastructures, institutions, organizations, communities, and perhaps most importantly, the individual. Built as they are upon postmodern theories, particularly those of Jean Baudrillard (1981)*, a conscious recognition of the existence of mediatization in society allows one to more easily identify technology's infiltration of reality by making visible the impact that media has on everyday life. Particularly as educators, this recognition challenges us to more critically reflect upon what is and is not mediated in our daily lives both in and out of our classroom. Ending the first half of his manifesto, Buckingham positions his central argument within these larger conversations surrounding the fundamental questions related to both social contexts of technology, such as the influence of media power, and the dynamic and complex nature of our 21st century experiences with media and technology, such as digital inequalities. These explorations, as well as his declaration that, "we need to understand in detail how and why things work in the way they do" (Buckingham, 2019, p. 63), acts as foundation for the introduction of his manifesto's new media education framework.

For Buckingham, the entire foundation of media literacy is built upon one's ability to recognize and understand four critical concepts that define media: *language*, *representation*, *production*, and *audience*. One can be considered media literate when they have developed a comprehensive understanding of these concepts through this new model for media education, which "entails a dynamic relationship between *reading* (that is, textual analysis); writing (creative production); and

contextual analysis (which sets individual reading and writing in a broader social context)" (Buckingham, 2019, p. 69).

Buckingham's new model intentionally challenges current iterations of media education. One such challenge is the false assumption that all young people are digital natives as a result of their daily exposure to networked media and therefore find media works intuitive. That Buckingham opposes this particular assumption is not wholly unfamiliar; he previously made this argument in a 2010 book chapter, "Do We Really Need Media Education 2.0?" published in *Digital Content Creation: Perceptions, Practices, and Perspectives*. Buckingham's new model emphasises the idea of media as discourse and the way in which it can be leveraged for students' learning. This is certainly not to suggest that Buckingham is uninterested in the creative sides of media education; far from it, he simply advocates that true media literacy depends upon a critical understanding developed through one's ability to read and analyze media as presented. This critical understanding "should enable us not just to understand how the media work…but also to imagine how things might be different" (Buckingham, 2019, p. 115).

The clarity with which Buckingham illustrates this new foundational approach allows him to present a convincing argument for its application within contemporary media education. His critical framework embraces students' previous experiences and knowledge about media, while also challenging their many assumptions and creating new avenues for critical engagement. Using social media as his first exemplar, Buckingham also demonstrates ways to apply his proposition that "a dialectical relationship between theory and practice – or critique and creativity – is a fundamental and indispensable aspect of media education pedagogy" (2019, p. 74). In a chapter length case study, Buckingham illustrates how his four critical concepts can be integrated into practice to encourage students to think more deeply about contemporary social media, as well as what these revelations might mean for them as creators of social media content.

When Buckingham implements this model to discuss further case studies, he demonstrates how these codified and coherent set of principles not only enhance reading and analysis, but also provide opportunities for students to critically design and produce their own communications in ways previously unavailable to them. This demonstration of praxis suggests that the critical understanding (of media discourse) fostered by a media education is only useful insofar as it leads to action (design, production, and distribution) and becomes one of the book's most impactful moments. In this way, Buckingham succeeds in outlining ways to implement this new framework of critical concepts through practical and applicable strategies for teaching in a media education classroom

To write a manifesto, one must be willing to set themselves against entrenched hegemonic ideologies and instead promote provocative and radically innovative viewpoints. Buckingham does just that. His decades of experience in the field make him the ideal candidate to present this passionate argument for a new and transformed approach to media education. His arguments are

deeply connected to larger discourse within the field, though his work is admittedly more manifesto than academic text, he even elucidates many of these broader connections with notes that provide readers direction for further reading. The book's UK-focus does not hinder its applicability in North America or other non-European classroom contexts, making the pedagogical approach presented within the short book immediately accessible for implementation within media studies classrooms. *The Media Education Manifesto* ultimately contends that media education should be a fundamental right for every young person and student in school. If adopted, work as Buckingham has done here is likely to promote media studies classes around the globe, but, in the short term, the implementation of his pedagogical design for a new media education wherever possible seems an excellent place to start.

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