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# An incomplete recontextualisation? Media literacy, policy and the school curriculum

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## Abstract

The idea of media literacy – a set of skills and competencies which people should possess in order to navigate and understand the media– has been recently characterised in UK law by the Online Safety Act which makes token attempts to legislate for media literacy needs. It does this through means of an Online Media Literacy strategy, making recommendations about where it should appear in the school curriculum. This paper argues, however, that media literacy is an example of an incomplete recontextualisation. For Basil Bernstein, recontextualisation was the process by which an academic region, discipline or field of study became transformed into something which appeared in the school curriculum. In this paper it is argued that media literacy can only ever be an incomplete recontextualisation, because attempting to 'shoe-horn' it into other curricular areas, particularly PSHE or Computing does not allow for its fundamental conceptual bases – most notably, understandings of audience, representation, institutional power and media language – to be properly explored in the classroom. Ultimately the paper concludes that media literacy is best explored through the curricular subject of Media Studies, or through the curricular subject of English where criticality, textual analysis and creative production have been ways of exploring media texts.

Keywords: media literacy, recontextualisation, policy, schools, curriculum, online media literacy strategy.

## Introduction

The idea of media literacy – a set of skills and competencies which people should possess in order to navigate and understand the media, much of which is in some form or another, online – is increasingly occupying the attention of a wide range of policymakers and educators around the world. Much of the attention is focused on issues of online harm and safety, with the sense that people of all ages, but particularly young people, need to be 'protected' from content, and even views or opinions which is potential harmful to emotional, mental and physical well-being. However, alongside this seeking to protect – a phenomenon which, in many ways is as old as any mass medium – there is the desire that young people need to be educated in such a way that they will be better able to protect themselves through a more sophisticated and developed understanding of the way that online media communicate and are used. This desire is gradually being manifested in policy terms in countries like Singapore (Dharmaraj, 2022) and most notably in the UK, where the government's Online Media Literacy Strategy (DCMS, 2021) – hereafter, OMLS – is part of the bigger 2023 Online Safety Act.

On the face of it, this seems perfectly reasonable: the UK government, and others, are looking to support the development of media literacy for young people at a time when there seems to be a pressing need for this. However, a closer look at both policy such as the OMLS and the wider conception of media literacy, highlight some problems with the idea of media literacy as a kind of cross-curricular or extra-curricular entity which, while generally being seen as a positive policy move, is often inadequate for its intended purpose. These problems arise from three broad areas; firstly, the tendency of media literacy research and policy to focus on some quite narrow issues and research them in methodologically limited ways; secondly, the conceptions of knowledge at play in media literacy, and thirdly the relationship of media literacy to the school curriculum. This paper seeks to highlight these two groups of problems by presenting a critical commentary on the OMLS as policy and suggest that Basil Bernstein's concept of recontextualisation (Bernstein, 1996) is a helpful way of both understanding them and thinking about how they might be resolved. The paper goes on to propose that the school subject of Media Studies, which has been taught in UK schools and other parts of the world for over 40 years, is likely to produce more media literate young people. These arguments are made by first considering some of the problems with media literacy as an idea, particularly as it is exemplified in the OMLS; exploring the way that thinking about Media and Communications as a Bernsteinian region and its recontextualisation might help us to address these problems, particularly around knowledge; and finally suggesting why school Media Studies could produce better media literacy from a position of curricular strength.

## The problem with media literacy and knowledge: the example of the OMLS

It is important to note from the start that media literacy is not in itself, a bad or unhelpful notion, and indeed, there are many contexts in which it can be characterised as a societal good. Indeed, in other work, I suggest that it is a pragmatic response to the situations that educators and education systems find themselves in at this point in the 21st century (Connolly, 2025). It is not the position of this paper to undermine the idea of media literacy, or the many diligent scholars and thoughtful policymakers who wish to promote it. It is, however, the position of this paper that the project of media literacy will generally not be able to do the things it sets out to do, because it is being characterised in such a way that important aspects of both the educational discourse of 'teaching the media' and the wider question of who should do this education are quite regularly obfuscated or worst still, completely avoided by policymakers. I would suggest that this inadequacy has four main causes; 1) A general problem with the term 'literacy' and what it has come to mean; 2) a reluctance by media literacy educators to deal with some fundamental questions within the wider discourse of media education; 3) A misunderstanding about the kinds of knowledge which are involved in really good media education and 4) An ideological tension which exists between politically conservative views of school subjects and wider societal concerns about young people's online safety and knowledge of the media. All four of these causes are exemplified in the OMLS, and an exploration of each cause with some examples follows. Subsequently I will suggest that Bernsteinian ideas about recontextualisation can help us to overcome these problems.

## Literacy: a problematic term

A number of years ago, a colleague and I suggested that one of the problems with talking about media literacy, or indeed any kind of literacy at all, was that it had become a kind of shibboleth (Connolly and Readman, 2017); a catch-all term used to identify an aspect of society where the general feeling was that the understanding of that aspect did not reach an expected minimum standard. Financial literacy, emotional literacy, political literacy and a great many other literacies have come to be discussed in a 'something must be done about this' way, suggesting that the term literacy has come to mean knowing a particular subject better than you do currently. This is, I would suggest unhelpful, particularly in the case of media literacy, because this kind of discourse ignores both the origins of literacy as an educational practice and suggests that by meeting some arbitrary minimum requirement, the problem of illiteracy will necessarily be solved.

There have been many attempts to define and re-define literacy in the last forty years (e.g. Macedo,1994; Street 1995; Cope and Kalantzis 2000) particularly in the light of the way that technologies of varying kinds have altered its conception. Perhaps for this

reason, it is most useful to return to Colin Lankshear's definition of literacy and remind ourselves of what lies at the core of the issue.

> 'Literacy is not the name of a finite technology, set of skills, or any other 'thing'. We should recognise, rather, that there are many specific literacies, each comprising an identifiable set of socially constructed practices based upon print and organised around beliefs about how skills of reading and writing may or, perhaps, should be used' (1987, p. 57)

This definition reminds us that literacy, whichever version of it we are talking about, involves both reading and writing. This is very important when thinking about media education, because our desire to have young people be media literate should involve a significant focus not only on how people read and comprehend the media, but also how they create, curate and distribute it. As I have argued elsewhere (Gibson & Connolly, 2023) there is almost no focus in the OMLS on a significant part of young people's encounter with the media; namely their desire to make and distribute media texts. In the five principles which underpin the strategy, only one vaguely alludes to the idea that young people might do this, and even then, only characterises it in terms of 'contribution' (see below).

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| The framework's five principles state that users should understand:<br>– the risks of sharing personal data online and how that data can be used by others, and be able to take action to protect their privacy online<br>– how the online environment operates and use this to inform decisions online<br>– how online content is generated, and be able to critically analyse the content they consume<br>– actions online have consequences offline, and use this understanding in their online interactions<br>– how to participate in online engagement and contribute to making the online environment positive, whilst understanding the risks of engaging with others |

Figure 1: *The Five Principles underpinning the Media Literacy Framework in the OMLS* (DCMS, 2021)

This failure to see media literacy in what might be described as 'production positive' terms by not acknowledging the 'writing' aspect of literacy is likely to result in a very reductive view of how young people learn about the media. David Buckingham (2022) has suggested that when this reduction takes place, it is much easier to characterise this learning in a 'tick box way; effectively, media literacy becomes a list of things we should be able to do to protect us from the evils of the mass media. For Buckingham, this instrumentalism fails to provide good media education. I would agree with this, largely on

the grounds that in the version of media literacy provided by the OMLS and media literacy strategies more generally, there is a tendency to think in terms of learner competencies. This speaks to a bigger debate about knowledge and skills which is well-rehearsed by people with an interest in the role of knowledge in education (e.g. Young & Muller, 2014.) However, for media education, reducing things to competencies is not likely to produce better educated media users or indeed citizens. As I discuss below, there are some quite particular types of knowledge which are important for media education which are being missed by these strategies.

## Unanswered questions: teaching the media

The first of these missing elements in both the OMLS and media literacy models more generally, is what Zongyi Deng would characterise as subject content. For Deng (2020) content is the knowledge selected specifically into an institutional curriculum and entails both epistemological and teleological questions about types of knowledge and its purpose within the curriculum – effectively, that of which a school subject consists. While it is perfectly possible to argue that media literacy is not and should not be a curricular subject (see below), it is both this argument and the subsequent avoidance of particular questions of content which mean that it will not be able to do what it wants to do. Nowhere is this more evident than in questions of institutional power within the media. Questions about who owns media organisations and companies, how do they own and control them, how are these regulated and what does that mean for the media consumer? While some models of media literacy more widely do acknowledge the importance of these kind of questions (e.g. Potter, 2004) the OMLS provides a good exemplification of how they are often avoided. At no point in the 105 page strategy document are these sorts of questions raised, or is a means suggested by which they might be addressed. The only mention of media industries and companies or how they interact with media users are in vague exhortations for these organisations to be responsible for what gets posted on their platforms. There is a case study of a Google initiative which promotes internet safety (DCMS, 2021, p. 47) however, perhaps unsurprisingly, this does not interrogate Google's own role or positionality in the content it gives people access to.

As I have suggested elsewhere (Gibson & Connolly, 2023) while online safety is an important part of this work, it is not sufficient to ensure an understanding of the way online media companies or even more analogue institutions work. Indeed, the suggestions about where media literacy might be sited in the school curriculum (DCMS, 2021, p. 90–91) mean that it is quite likely that they never will be addressed by the strategy at all. These problems are discussed further below.

## Types of knowledge in media education

I have suggested before (Connolly, 2020) that Media Studies requires some very particular epistemological frameworks in order understand how knowledge and knowledge structures work within it. This kind of epistemic exceptionalism has been a theme of debates about knowledge for some forty years (Alvarado and Ferguson, 1983; Corner, 1995), but the recent traction gained by Michael Young's (2012) powerful knowledge argument has forced media educators to re-examine where both media education and Media Studies as a subject in schools sit in relation to Young's arguments. For readers unfamiliar with Young's account of knowledge, it can be summarised briefly in terms of the idea that some knowledge is essential to learn because it has social and intellectual power. Young uses this argument to suggest that knowledge taught in school must be both specialist and disciplinary in nature. For Young everyday knowledge – such as knowledge of popular culture for example, has no place in the classroom. This account is clearly problematic for media education, and I have suggested at various points that media education needs to be epistemologically eclectic. At one level it relies upon quite particular critical realist accounts where knowledge is both agile (Luke, 2009) and quite often un-fixed. In more traditional epistemological terms, it requires not only 'knowledge- how' and 'knowledge – that' but also knowledge by experience. These types of knowledge are often characterised through a key concept framework; knowledge that a number of different types of camera shot and distance are named in particular ways and knowledge how a director like Katherine Bigelow uses them in a film like *Detroit*. This coupled with my experiential knowledge from watching the film of how I felt about the subject matter, and my perspective on my fellow audience members experiences gives some notion of this eclecticism.

In the classroom however, I would argue that it is even more complex than this. In my earliest work as media education research I thought that there was quite a clear connection between production work - making media texts in classrooms – and ideas about craft and the Heideggerian version of techne (Connolly, 2014). In this account, Heidegger (1993) takes the Aristotelian concept of techne, and explains how craft skills can be used to reveal truths about the world. This, coupled with some sense of the aesthetic, allows Heidegger to suggest that both craft skill and conceptual knowledge can be developed through making things. For me, production work in a media classroom is the embodiment of this knowledge. Julian McDougall's (2012) idea of the 'pedagogy of the inexpert' – a situation in which the student and the teacher negotiate their often-equal amounts of differing conceptual and experiential knowledge in order to help the student to assemble their own media text – is a good way of framing the epistemological nature of the media classroom. This runs directly counter to the establishment of Young's (2012)

powerful knowledge argument where the expert knowledge of the teacher is central to the validity of both that knowledge and the subject itself.

Media literacy, on the other hand, is often characterised in terms of a set of competencies. The OMLS is no exception to this. Figure 1 above outlines things that the user should understand without suggesting what users might be able to do. There are some case studies illustrating what educators and young people could do to develop any competencies associated with media literacy, and to be fair some of these do talk about the knowledge required to navigate certain types of situations. However, there are very few examples of what this actually consists of knowing.

## Media literacy and the curriculum: an ideological stand-off

This last point may describe a peculiarly English circumstance, but it is indicative of the kinds of tension which lie at the heart of debates around national curricula, and while these are particularly evident in the UK (both in terms of the national curriculum used in England, and its starkly divorced relationship to the national curricula of the devolved nations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) they do also resonate with debates about national curricula in other countries (see Priestly and Sinnema, 2014; Rata, 2012; Rose, 2016 etc). In English schools teaching about the media has seen radical exclusion from the National Curriculum while at the same time, elective Media education at both 14 and 16 has been forced to conform to an utterly inflexible 'knowledge-rich' model of curriculum organisation in publicly available examination specifications. These changes, outlined in some depth elsewhere (Connolly, 2022) have seen teaching about media texts removed completely from National Curriculum English – traditionally the launching pad for study of the media in secondary school. The desire to return to a 'traditional, knowledge rich curriculum' wherein English is about the printed word, poetry, grammar and what is often referred to as 'literary heritage' has meant that young people are now less likely to be required to make a critical encounter with media texts in class. In elective qualifications in England – the GCSE and A-Level – Media Studies specifications are available, but the desire to reduce them to lists of things that should be known – as suggested by the 'cultural literacy' model proposed by E.D. Hirsch (1987) - effectively ossifies the knowledge and skills contained within them, ignoring the agile nature of a subject which has a fundamental and explicit connection to the vibrancy of popular culture. (Buckingham, 2017; Connolly, 2022)

And so it would seem that the UK government is at a rather peculiar ideological stand-off with itself; on the one hand it has deliberately, and for largely political reasons, excised the study of media from the school curriculum. The appeal to certain voters of a traditional curriculum in which English focuses on literary heritage, History focuses on

English Kings and Queens, and Geography focuses on the physical rather than the human, is undeniable - an education policy win with voters of a certain age and outlook. On the other hand, however, it knows that many of those voters are concerned about people's ability – again, particularly young people – to navigate the media, and to be alert to the dangers of misinformation and 'fake news'. Interestingly, even though the government that wrote the OMLS is no longer with us, its successor administration appears to have re-committed to a 'knowledge-rich' curriculum despite declaring a desire for curricular reform (DFE, 2025).

The policy solution to this is, apparently, the OMLS, in which it is suggested that there are a number of places in the school curriculum in which media literacy can be taught. On pages 90-91 of the strategy document, the authors at the DCMS concede that there is no (longer any) explicit teaching of media literacy in the National Curriculum for England. However, they do suggest that there are opportunities to cover aspects of media literacy in a range of school subjects, including Computing, RSHE (Relationships Sex and Health Education) Citizenship and, somewhat surprisingly, English. In this last example, though, the strategy document is clear to stress that this does not involve looking at media texts specifically but rather practising their 'critical reading' of a range of texts in order to distinguish fact from opinion. This final observation about the OMLS highlights the inadequacy of the media literacy strategy as a means of better media education. None of these curricular approaches, where discussion of the media is 'shoe-horned' – or in the case of English tactically avoided – into subjects that do not deal with questions of institutional power, representation, audience experience or give students the opportunity to make critically informed production choices, will only ever partly achieve the goal of having a more media literate citizenry.

## Media and Communication as a region to be recontextualised.

There is another way here, I would suggest. Through use of Basil Bernstein's concept of recontextualisation, it is possible to understand what is going on. For Bernstein, this is the process by which disciplinary knowledge is translated into subject knowledge. 'Discipline' and 'subject' are used in very specific ways here, with the former referring to the study of something in a higher education context, where new knowledge is produced, and the latter referring to school subjects, which are a reproduction of knowledge. Recontextualisation is the way that this translation occurs, and as I discuss below can be quite a complex process. However, before this, it is important to consider where Media Studies and Media Literacy might sit in Bernstein's account of knowledge production.

For Bernstein, Media and Communication were what he termed a 'region' (Bernstein, 1996, p. 66). A region was a collection of disciplines brought together because they had some outward facing purpose. The most obvious examples here would be medicine or architecture. Medicine brings together a number of previously existing disciplines, such as Human Biology or Anatomy, and recontextualises them in the service of applying them to 'real-world' problems. In Media, presumably then, the region involves recontextualising certain kinds of industrial problems, such as making and distributing media texts. For this reason, media literacy in and of itself, probably cannot be regarded as a region. Indeed, I will argue below that this is because it cannot be properly recontextualised; in Jim Hordern's (2021. p. 599) terms, it is an 'inadequate recontextualization'. Indeed, Bernstein's characterisation of Media Studies as a region reflects a wider debate amongst media scholars themselves, who have had extensive dialogue about whether or not it is a field or a discipline. For academics like Kaarle Nordenstreng (2007) there is no doubt; media and communication studies are not a discipline because they are already too multidisciplinary and too eclectic in the ground they try to cover. Indeed, as Jonathan Sterne (2005) has argued, the notion of 'disciplinarity' is actually undesirable to media scholars, as fixing knowledge in this way is likely to stifle innovation.

To return to recontextualisation though, it is important to understand why the process can produce more media literate students, but probably not in the way that most media literacy scholars intend, and definitely not in the way that a policy like the OMLS intends. For Bernstein, the recontextualising process is constituted by two parts; what he terms the Official Recontextualising Field (ORF) and the Pedagogic Recontextualising Field (PRF). The ORF is made up of agencies like governments, inspectorates and other policymakers who have a vested interest in the make-up of the curriculum. The PRF is made up of teachers, teacher-educators and schools, all of whom are trying to enact that curriculum in the best interest of their students. In Bernstein's account, the ORF and the PRF are often engaged in a battle to decide what gets put in the curriculum, but both are trying to recontextualise from the disciplinary form (i.e. as the knowledge appears in Higher Education) to the subject form (as it appears in the school curriculum). It is quite often the case as Bernstein points out that the ORF has wider concerns at stake when it is doing this; for example, it may see economic outcomes as being a desirable by-product of recontextualising a discipline in a particular way. In the case of media literacy, the ORF is attempting to make people aware of the dangers of fake news, disinformation etc in a particular cross-curricular or extra-curricular way. I want to argue that this will not work, because the recontextualisation is both incomplete and consequently, inadequate.

To explain what I mean by an incomplete, or inadequate recontextualisation, it is useful to draw on the work of Hordern (2021) who has done the most significant recent work on recontextualisation and the curriculum. In this work he offers two explanations as to why recontextualisation may not produce an effective version of a discipline when it is reproduced in the school curriculum. The first occurs when the

> '...processes of selection and transformation are not undertaken by teachers with sufficient expertise to do so. The consequence of inadequate recontextualisation could be a ...curriculum which has recourse only to policy documents or to mandated teaching materials as the basis for its consciousness, identity and practice' (p. 599)

Even a cursory glance at the OMLS suggests that this is evident in its view of both teacher expertise – it effectively assumes that there is none, which is a grave mistake given the large number of media studies teachers in the UK – and the policy itself, along with the case studies within it, are the only indicators of potential practice. It is interesting to note that the research upon which the OMLS was based was methodologically skewed towards evidence from randomised controlled trials (which, as the OMLS document itself notes, is not particularly strong in the area of media literacy). At no point in the process of researching the issues were media studies teachers consulted about how this strategy might be formed or enacted in the curriculum.

The second circumstance that Hordern offers as an example of inadequate recontextualisation is the idea of the 'recontextualization error' (Hordern, 2021, p. 598). Here insufficient knowledge of both the discipline being recontextualised, and the disciplinary practice associated with it, result in the pedagogic discourse of the curriculum being weakened. Even if we do not accept that Media Studies is a discipline, but rather a region, the regionalised knowledge and practices of the media are in no way being reproduced properly, either in the OMLS, or I would argue, in media literacy policies and scholarship more widely. In order to achieve a complete and proper recontextualisation, the wider questions of media ownership, audience and representation raised earlier in the paper, along with opportunities to explore these questions through creative production work would be properly embedded in the curriculum. The OMLS neither does this, not intends for this to happen at any point in its proposed outline or subsequent action plans. It is possible to argue, of course, that this an intentional inadequacy; that in failing to ensure that young people are media literate, policymakers keep citizens in check and are able to use the media to manipulate them even more than they are already; however, in this instance, as the Media Education Association (MEA) (2021) has argued, this is more likely to occur through bad policy making rather than bad intentions.

## School Media Studies – stronger media literacy within the curriculum

Despite this incomplete recontextualisation, there is a means of achieving a more media literate citizenry, of recontextualising the essential elements of the field of Media Studies so that they act for the good of society. This way lies in the establishment of the curricular school subject of Media Studies. School Media Studies produces a better recontextualisation for a number of reasons, three of which I think are particularly relevant here.

Firstly, Media Studies as it is taught in school, both in the UK and in other parts of the world, allows for a much fuller understanding of the way that the media works on people who make, use and consume it. This is because of the key concept model, pioneered in the UK (e.g. Bazalgette, 1992) but now used in other parts of the world (Poyntz, 2016) which broadly seeks to understand the media from both the point of production and distribution – through the concepts of 'industry' and 'institution' - to the experience of the media consumer via the concepts of 'audience' and 'representation'. There is also significant focus on the meaning of media texts, characterised by the concept of 'media language' or in some models, simply 'language' or 'text' (McDougall, 2006). This provides a much more complete sense of the media ecosystem and the individuals place within it than many media literacy models such as those proposed by UNESCO (2018) and certainly the OMLS, both of which tend to over-focus on disinformation and misinformation. It is not in question that these are urgent concerns for educators, but I would argue that in order to get the best understanding of them, placing them in a wider conceptual framework is more helpful. I would also argue that this framework provides school media studies with what Johann Muller (2009, p. 216–217) terms 'conceptual coherence', as well as contextual coherence. For Muller, one of the weaknesses of interdisciplinary subject is that they often demonstrate the latter at the expense of the former. I take this to mean that many interdisciplinary subjects or fields – and to an extent Media Studies is one of these – are constructed in such a way that they deal with particular contexts where knowledge is applied into a particular context. School Media Studies has both conceptual coherence, in the form of the conceptual framework, and a contextual coherence, in that this framework allows teachers and students to see media texts and industries in relation to their different contexts across time – or indeed, entirely in the moment. It is quite likely that a Media Studies teacher will use the concept of Institution to explain how media distribution networks have changed historically, from the oligopolies of the Hollywood Studios to the streaming giants of Amazon and Netflix. These are all media institutions, and fundamentally, they behave in the same way, despite using entirely different technologies to sell their product. This kind of recontextualisation is likely to produce a much more aware media user.

Secondly, there is little doubt that creative media production – making media texts in the classroom – produces better critical understanding of those concepts which underpin both the school media studies curriculum and ideas about media literacy. This has been demonstrated time and again in the academic literature around classroom-based media production (e.g. Grahame, 1990; Sefton-Green, 1995; Burn & Durran, 2007; Cannon, Potter & Burn, 2019 etc.) where there is qualitative demonstration of improved criticality achieved through making and evaluating the texts produced. Elsewhere (Connolly, 2025) I describe the process of the media studies teacher developing this criticality through the combined teaching of key media concepts and creative production work as 'techne pedagogy'. This term goes some way to describing the complexity of what Media Studies teachers do in developing a more advanced understanding of the media through having students make media texts. The OMLS does not mention the fact that many young people will make media texts informally – in effect, the 'writing' aspect of media literacy, if one wishes to pursue that analogy. This is a serious inadequacy in its formation, in that if policymakers were genuinely interested in a more media literate population, they would want young people to discuss and explore the relationship between what they made and how this might be viewed, edited and redistributed by media institutions. These kinds of discussions regularly take place in Media Studies classrooms as part of the evaluation processes that often follow production work. Production work must be part of the recontextualisation of the knowledge involved in making people more media literate, and this is an integral part of school Media Studies.

Finally, the mere act of putting Media Studies on a curricular footing, rather than leaving it as a cross-curricular literacy entity will almost certainly mean that teacher expertise will grow up around it. The history of school media studies in the UK suggests that where curricular Media Studies is a growing concern, teacher knowledge and expertise grows accordingly (Bolas, 2009). In Bernstein's terms this strengthens the PRF, making it more likely that recontextualisation will happen in a complete way. The role of teacher educators is important here. In the OMLS, there is simply no role identified for teacher educators; interestingly, some subject associations, such as the UKs PSHE Association are identified as being part of the Task Force (DCMS, 2023) that will implement the strategy, but again, for many schools in England, Citizenship is a cross-curricular theme rather than a discrete subject in the curriculum. Indeed Citizenship is the example that Hordern takes as a potential area for inadequate recontextualisation, and thus it would seem that there is the potential here to lay incompleteness upon incompleteness.

## Concluding Remarks

It is important to re-iterate here, that my argument is not about the intentions of media literacy, or the academic work done to establish it as an important area of research and policy development. The argument here is really about the way that media literacy is being characterised in strategies such as the OMLS, and the way that curricular Media Studies would meet the aims and intentions of media literacy advocates much more successfully. By using Bernstein's work on recontextualisation, I am attempting to show that the sorts of knowledge and skills required to be media literate will not by and large, acquired by young people through a strategy like the OMLS. I acknowledge here that I do think that knowledge behaves differently in a school subject like Media Studies, and as a consequence some of the pre-existing schools of thought around powerful knowledge and things like Karl Maton's knower structure do not work as ways of thinking about knowledge in the subject. I have argued elsewhere (Connolly, 2020; Connolly, 2025) that it is likely to consist of a mix of 'knowledge-how', 'knowledge-that', experiential knowledge, craft and much more. However, it is clear that the characterisation of media literacy in the OMLS simply does not deal with much of this knowledge at all, and such is likely to do our young people a great disservice. Curricular Media Studies, particularly in the secondary school is a better recontextualisation of the key knowledge and skills they need, and policymakers are to be urged to support this as a better means of achieving widespread media literacy.

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