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## **Chapter 5**

### **Approaches to Teacher Professional Development in Digital and Media Literacy Education**

By Renee Hobbs

#### **Abstract**

There is a growing awareness that teacher education is essential to integrating media literacy into the K-12 curriculum in the United States. This chapter reviews four approaches to teacher professional development in U.S. digital and media literacy education: curriculum resources, conferences, summer institutes and job-embedded training programs. Each of these models supports teachers who seek to integrate media literacy into their curricula. The affordances and limitations of each are reviewed through specific examples from regional initiatives in the Northeast United States. A typology of the approaches identifies the assumptions, core principles and concepts underpinning teacher education programs in digital and media literacy education.

*Keywords: media literacy, professional development, teacher education*

Everyone agrees that teacher education is essential to integrating media literacy into the K-12 curriculum in the United States. However, professional development in digital and media literacy takes many forms, reflecting its complex multidisciplinary identity at the intersection of media studies and educational practice. Further, due to the modest level of visibility regarding the value of media literacy in U.S. education, educators who have effectively introduced it into the K-12 curriculum have had to be opportunistic in the approach to their own education.

Professional development is vital to the process of any type of education reform and renewal. At the heart of it, professional development is defined as activity designed to prepare paid staff members for improved performance in their present or future roles in their school districts (Desimone, 2009). Content, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation are all critical features of

professional development. These features contribute to the increased likelihood that greater teacher knowledge and skills will result in changes to attitudes and behavior that in turn will contribute to changes in the kind of instruction that improves student learning (Desimone, 2009). When done well, professional development has a transformative effect on a school community, establishing a culture of quality that contributes to lifelong learning (Easton, 2008).

In examining the models for teacher professional development, Kennedy (2005) identifies nine types. Some are more focused on the transmission of knowledge from an expert to an educator while other models rely on peer-to-peer learning. A typical approach to professional development brings an expert into a school to offer reading, math, or behavior management programs. However, school administrators often control such programs without explicitly discussing their rationale, values and context. Little is also known about how this new knowledge is implemented in practice. Thus, Nieto (2003, p. 395) argues that a great deal of teacher education focuses on questions of “what” and “how” to teach without deeply exploring the question of “why” to teach it.

Approaches to teacher education vary in their assumptions about what teachers-as-learners need and how they learn best. Since the early 1990s, technology integration efforts have often relied on one-shot professional development programs

focused on practical issues like how to operate equipment or software. these programs seem fragmented and disconnected from classroom practice and teachers may have limited ability to control what they learn. Although they may be able to choose from a menu of choices, such an approach may intentionally or unintentionally enable school leaders to “to control and limit the agenda,” placing teachers in a passive role as the recipients of specific knowledge (Kennedy, 2005, p. 238).

In contrast, other forms of professional development, such as the national writing project, “Digital Is,” or the Essential Schools movement, are more truly generative, liberating educators to become self-directed learners and reflective practitioners who participate in collaborative learning communities to develop their teaching craft. Using these more collaborative approaches, teachers establish their own learning goals and plan how to accomplish them. Often, they work in coordinated teams where they are given the time and other resources they need to support their learning experience.

As yet, there is little scholarly literature documenting the different approaches to professional development in media literacy. This paper explores four approaches to digital and media literacy education for teachers in the United States: curriculum resources, training and conferences, learning communities and formal education. Each of these models offers educational support for teachers who seek to integrate media

literacy into the curriculum. Although such professional development models are often layered together and used in combination (Hobbs & Moore, 2013), it is nonetheless important to examine the particular affordances of their component parts. After reviewing some examples of these four approaches along with the affordances and limitations of each, this paper will then identify the underlying assumptions, core principles and concepts that underpin them.

### **A Brief U.S. History**

Through cooperation and collaborative efforts with philanthropists, federal government, and the media industry, a variety of media literacy professional development programs have been developed and made available to teachers in the United States over the years.

Philanthropists first made it possible to promote leadership within the media literacy community through innovative models of professional development. For example, at the time Elizabeth Thoman developed the Felton Media Literacy Scholars Program in 1997, the Center for Media Literacy in Los Angeles had received a major gift from television pioneer Norman Felton, the producer of “Dr. Kildare” and “The Man from U.N.C.L.E.” Teachers who were selected to be Felton Scholars received a substantial package of books, videos and curriculum resources, and participated in a

75-hour program over a six-month period to become certified “master teachers.” This qualified them to conduct teacher in-service programs and offer community workshops on a variety of media topics. Topics explored in the Felton Scholars program included advertising and consumer culture; popular culture and public health; parents, children and television; media economics; public relations and the news; and citizenship in the media age. Because media literacy was a new academic discipline that could be integrated into existing language arts, social studies, health education, and even math and science curricula, Thoman explained that, “introducing teachers to media literacy is the necessary first step to bringing the skills of media literacy to thousands of Southern California kids and their families.” A Boston cohort of educators also participated in the program under the leadership of Renee Hobbs when they were at Babson College. Some graduates of the Felton Scholars program went on to lead other professional development programs, as in the case of Pam Steager, who launched an education initiative in Providence, Rhode Island which provided teacher training to educators and community members. These examples reaffirm the important role of philanthropy and nonprofit organizations as leading innovators in the practice of media literacy education.

Efforts by the federal government to improve media literacy education have not been as influential in developing the field due to an unfortunate incident that

subsequently limited government investment in and support for it. In the 1970s, when the United States Department of Education funded an \$823,651 grant to support critical viewing skills education (the forerunner of media literacy), Senator William Proxmire famously made fun of it. As Kamerer (2013) notes, Proxmire's Golden Fleece Award for "teaching children how to watch television" had the effect of marginalizing media literacy education. A plan to develop teacher education initiatives using the new curriculum was ultimately scrapped due the negative publicity generated by the award. As a result, the curricular resources and materials developed under the federal grant have sat on library shelves and in warehouses, ever since, unable to reach their intended audience.

Because of the failure of this early effort, for many educators, their first exposure to media literacy concepts came when they were introduced to teaching with computers, digital media and technology. With the advent of microcomputers, educational technology initiatives grew in prominence and new approaches to teacher education became available to show teachers how to use the technology. By the 1990s, the United States federal government scheme, Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) funded professional development programs for educators to enhance their technology integration competency. A number of projects funded through this mechanism were designed to improve student achievement and did

promote media literacy. For example, middle school teachers in the Palm Springs Unified School District, a medium-sized, high-poverty school district in Southern California, participated in a research-based course consisting of a student program and faculty development. Strategies used for faculty development involved coaching and mentoring to develop teacher expertise; assessment of instructional activities related to student achievement; access to differentiated professional development opportunities; and access to high quality curricular resources (Leh & Grafton, 2009).

Professional development programs have also been established by media industries working in collaboration with scholars and academics. For example, in 1991, Linda Brown and Renee Hobbs, at The Learning Channel, developed the “Know TV” media literacy curriculum for middle school and high school teachers. As part of the cable company’s marketing effort, workshops for teachers were offered in large cities across the country. The program offered nine questions for critically analyzing documentary videos, a category of cable television that was rapidly expanding to include the then-new genre of “reality TV.” In 1998, the Maryland State Department of Education collaborated with the Discovery Channel on the creation of “Assignment: Media Literacy,” a comprehensive 18-unit curriculum for grades K-12. Thousands of educators in each of Maryland’s 23 counties participated in a day-long training program to learn how to use the curriculum, and the school library media

specialists were among the curriculum's most enthusiastic supporters. Similar training occurred in Texas, Massachusetts and other states throughout the 1990s with financial support from newspapers, cable television and the broadcast industry.

Because most educational institutions offer professional development programs for their faculty members, this is perhaps the most common approach taken in schools. In particular, colleges and universities have incorporated some media literacy concepts into their use of media and technology in education. The University of Delaware, for example, has a long history of supporting the learning needs of its faculty members with educational programs that advance digital and media literacy competence. During the mid-1990s, a collaborative team, including the university's library and IT staff, developed the University of Delaware Faculty Institute on Teaching, Learning, and Technology. The goal was to encourage the faculty to make greater use of technological resources for instruction and to help them make effective use of information technology, electronic library resources, and multimedia. About half of the participants sought information on how to develop and conduct courses using television, video, CD and audio resources to promote student learning. Further, in June 1996, nearly 500 UD faculty and staff members participated in a week-long institute, offering twenty-three workshops. Searching the Web as a library resource

and integrating Web resources into the classroom were among the most popular ones (deVry, Greene, Millard & Sine, 1996).

To be relevant, professional development programs in digital and media literacy must be tailored to the needs of the educators who attend them. At the University of Delaware, researchers noted that in some cases, faculty members attended sessions that relied on prior knowledge they did not possess. For example, some people attended a class in how to create a Web page without ever having browsed the Web, and some tried to learn PowerPoint without any prior experience with a desktop computer. The challenge of providing the right combination of knowledge, skills and competencies has only become more complex as digital media technologies have become ubiquitous and the skill and knowledge gaps related to using the Internet and social media continue to widen (Hargittai, 2010).

The plethora of approaches to professional development and the relative paucity of literature pertaining to teacher education in media literacy instruction reflect the situated and contextual nature of the work. Thus, when curriculum resources and professional development are offered this could also represent an effort to influence the curriculum agenda. For example, when the Newspaper in Education community embraced media literacy pedagogy as a way to reach K-12 teachers by offering them professional development and curriculum resources, it simultaneously aimed to

increase the sale of newspapers to the schools. Lawless and Pellegrino (2007) note that “decisions about when to use technology, what technology to use, and for what purpose cannot be made in isolation of theories and research on learning, instruction and assessment” (p. 581). In the following sections, this paper identifies typical features of four types of professional development programs in digital and media literacy education, describing some of the key assumptions these programs have made about learners and learning. Table 1 provides an overview of the four types of professional development programs in media literacy education for teachers, with key features, assumptions and examples.

<Table 1 about here>

### **Curriculum Resources**

By definition, curriculum resources support the professional development of teachers. When using a curriculum resource, teachers are expected to read and review the materials and then use them with their own students. A number of important organizations have advanced digital and media literacy education through the development and distribution of multimedia resources for teaching and learning. One of the most influential media literacy organizations, the Media Education Foundation,

produces and distributes media literacy videos and study guides. These resources are important to teacher professional development. A good film study guide offers teachers a powerful learning experience, helping to advance their content knowledge and their pedagogical competency. For example, the documentary entitled, “Constructing Public Opinion,” with Professor Justin Lewis, examines how public opinion is manufactured and distorted in ways that undermine true democratic participation. According to Lewis, opinion polling reflects the intention of the political, corporate and media elites to maintain the status quo to satisfy their interdependent interests (Lewis, n.d.). In general, film study guides provide a summary of the key points in a film together with questions that stimulate open-ended discussion.

Another organization, Annenberg Learner, has created comprehensive professional development multimedia programs to help teachers remain current on the content they teach. For example, “Essential Lens: Analyzing Photographs Across the Curriculum,” introduces teachers to the richness of photographs, seeking to inspire them to use photographs and photographic ephemera in their teaching; and provides them with practical methods to facilitate the use of these materials in classroom settings across disciplines. Created by Oregon Public Broadcasting, Essential Lens is a multidisciplinary professional development course targeted at middle and high

school teachers of English language arts, social studies, mathematics and science. The curriculum consists of five video programs, 11 curated photo collections with background text, classroom activities, and other resources.

In one video, a high-school teacher is seen introducing students to the protest movements of the 1960s to explore the role of young people in social change. While the video is being shown, the students view photos from the time period taken in four different countries. In groups, they analyze the images, using packets of background information provided in the curriculum. The “Focus In” method of analyzing the photos is described as having stages of observation, identifying the formal attributes of the photo, drawing inferences, and formulating further questions. The students then compose two kinds of photo captions: one captures the perspective of the photojournalist who took the picture and the other depicts the point of view of the subject depicted in the photo. The video’s narrator illustrates the key dimensions of the lesson with voiceovers of students and teachers commenting on the merits of the lesson. Video examples of lessons in action are a valuable way to model new instructional practices for teachers. Teachers who use the Essential Lens curriculum can also participate in a listserv, where they can pose questions, offer examples and give advice (Annenberg Learner, 2015).

The news media has also been active in helping advance digital and media literacy for many years. The *New York Times*, for example, offers a variety of media literacy curriculum resources to teachers at their Learning Network, a website with daily lesson plans encouraging students to read, critically analyze and respond in writing to news and opinion articles. These educational materials focus on learning how to examine both the form and the content of news stories. Another online educational resource, Newsela, working in partnership with the *Washington Post*, helps students master reading and critical thinking by adapting news articles targeted at young readers with a range of reading abilities, including below-grade and advanced levels. Students read the articles online and then take Common Core State Standards-aligned quizzes, which enables teachers to incorporate nonfiction content into the curriculum to help students learn more about the world. Webinars and prerecorded videos help teachers learn how to set up and use Newsela, with assistance from community advisors whom are educators offering their perspective as experienced users. In 2015, the cost of Newsela was \$18 per student per year, or \$6000 per school.

There are some core assumptions regarding the use of curriculum resources as a form of professional development. The most important one is grounded in the belief that teachers lack the time and/or expertise to create quality curriculum materials.

Time, talent and expertise are needed to develop quality instructional resources that make use of constructivist learning approaches to engage students in hands-on learning. Another expectation is that there will be little fidelity in implementing the curriculum. Although lessons, modules and units are presented in sequence, it is generally understood that teachers will present the curriculum flexibly, modifying the activities and materials in ways that meet the needs of the learners they serve.

Because there is a plethora of online curriculum resources, knowing how to find these resources becomes important. While it was once thought that online curriculum resources needed to be easy to access, and free and flexible to meet teachers' needs, the rapid success of Newsela proves this is wrong. With Newsela, educators can offer differentiated learning directly to students without having to invest in the cost of professional development for teachers. Further research is needed to better understand how curriculum resources may support or replace the need for teacher learning.

### **Trainings and Conferences**

Trainings, summer institutes and conferences are certainly the oldest and most common approach to professional development in digital and media literacy. By the mid-1950s, educators at the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) maintained a special interest group concerned with media, and educators attended

talks on a variety of subjects. Conferences generally offer professional development in the form of short talks by educators, ranging from five to ninety minutes, describing some approach to pedagogy that has been effective. Participants select which talks to attend and make implicit or explicit decisions on how or whether to apply what they have learned to their own classroom practice. The first national media literacy conference was held in the summer of 1995 when 400 participants gathered in Boone, North Carolina at the Appalachian State University's Reich College of Education. The attendees were diverse: teachers, library media specialists, university professors and researchers, media literacy scholars, professionals from public and commercial broadcasting, the cable industry, school and state public instruction administrators, parents, students, media artists and producers, and even White House officials. Eight plenary speakers keynoted important issues in media literacy, and seventy workshops featured classroom projects, media productions, and strategies in media education, for both general and specific applications. Since then, there has been a bi-annual national media literacy education conference, supported by the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), which is the national membership organization in the field.

Unlike conferences, training and summer institutes are a form of professional development offering deeper engagement with ideas and more intensive and intimate

opportunities for professional networking and peer learning. Such programs have been important in the history of media literacy. The Harvard Institute on Media Education, developed by Renee Hobbs, was the first national-level teacher education program, held at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in 1993 and 1994. Since 1995, Harvard's Kennedy School of Government has offered a summer institute for teachers, developed by Marvin Kalb and Janice Barrett, addressing Media and the American Government. Such programs attract self-directed and enthusiastic teachers with a special interest in the topic. Sometimes these programs bring together educators and media professionals to engage in genuine dialogue concerning the opportunities and challenges of media education. In other cases, educators watch and learn as journalists and media professionals share their opinions and experiences, and there is less attention paid to issues of curriculum and pedagogy.

There are a few core assumptions regarding training and conferences as forms of professional development. The most important assumption is that people benefit from other's expertise that includes both highly specific and contextual approaches to learning. This attitude toward professional development reflects the belief that one educator's passion is contagious; people can be motivated to learn about media literacy when they encounter new ideas during training or conferences, even when the contact is brief. The assumption, untested of course, is that people can and do

translate what they learn at a conference to subsequent learning experiences and practical applications. It is also assumed that educators who participate in training and conferences as a form of professional development can distinguish between high-quality and low-quality programs. Research is needed to further understand how participation in training and conferences supports the teaching and leadership skills of media literacy educators.

### **Formal Higher Education and Certificate Programs**

A variety of approaches are now being implemented in higher education to bring digital and media literacy competency to post-secondary school students. For example, there are stand-alone courses in media literacy and news literacy in the undergraduate communication curriculum (Fleming, 2015; Schmidt, 2012). In the allied area of information literacy, schools, such as the University of Scranton, have been experimenting with courses in the rhetoric of information and social media, using the term *metaliteracy* to describe how students develop meta-awareness of their behavior in digital media environments.

Pre-service teachers may gain exposure to media literacy education integrated into their methods classes or as a separate subject. Flores-Koulish (2010) uses both approaches to teaching pre-service elementary school teachers in Maryland, helping

students gain familiarity with the history of media literacy education; understand the interaction between the reader, text and culture; appreciate media as a text; and integrate media literacy lessons into the existing curriculum. In the process, students gain awareness of themselves as the consumers and producers of media. Taking what is familiar and seeing it in fresh ways, Flores-Koulish notes how students begin to analyze and question movies and other media for children that were previously taken for granted. She emphasizes the feelings of empowerment that transfer from the practice of critically analyzing the media to wider forms of engagement and activism. For example, she describes one student, Jane, who wrote media literacy lesson plans for Grade 1 students addressing issues pertaining to the consumer culture and environmental awareness, and then presented a workshop on this to her colleagues and the community. Through formal coursework, Flores-Koulish (2010) documents how a teacher may become “a champion and change agent” for critical media literacy (p. 15).

The first permanent graduate program in media literacy was developed in 1999 at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. Now titled, “New Media Literacies and Global Perspectives,” its MA and 18-credit certificate programs are among the few comprehensive media literacy degree programs in the nation. Since 2012, the complete programs have been offered online, and students are encouraged

to develop “the intellectual, technical, and aesthetic skills to successfully create, utilize and critique traditional, emerging, and converging new media, technologies, and literacies as they relate to individuals, societies, and cultures” (Appalachian State University, 2015). Students investigate the production, form, language, and dissemination of a variety of texts, including print, non-print, and evolving media, and the analysis of new media. Another school, Webster University in St. Louis, Missouri, offers both undergraduate and graduate degrees in media literacy, although neither one of the programs is explicitly formulated as professional development for teachers. Nonetheless, the Master of Communication Arts program at Webster’s School of Education allows educators and other professionals to position themselves for career advancement and other diverse opportunities. Webster students also learn how to integrate creative expression within the education system to benefit the students, the community and the school district at large. To accommodate the needs of adult learners who work as teachers, librarians and media professionals, the University of Rhode Island offers a 12-credit graduate certificate in digital literacy through a blended learning model that includes intensive face-to-face learning experiences during the summer combined with online learning during the academic year. The program explicitly emphasizes leadership in digital literacy by addressing strategies

for becoming a change agent for initiating and leading digital and media literacy programs in K-12, higher education, library and non-school settings.

Structured learning in media literacy is also occurring through new forms of higher education, enabling wider audiences to benefit from formal learning experiences delivered via online learning. Dan Gillmor of Arizona State University has developed and implemented a Media Literacy MOOC on the EdX platform, with support from the Robert R. McCormick Foundation. It features video conversations with Wikipedia's Jimmy Wales, the *New York Times* public editor Margaret Sullivan and CNN's Brian Stelter. Mr. Gillmor is also the author of the book, *Mediaactive*, which is available as a free download. In it, he notes that MOOCs are open in ways that most university courses are not (Gillmor, 2015). The MOOC invites adult learners to become active users of media, as readers, listeners, viewers and creators, but it does not function as a professional development tool for educators seeking guidance on the pedagogical practice of media literacy education. Similarly, the Metaliteracy MOOC addresses issues related to support metacognition regarding the nature of participation in online environments, building upon the research of Tom Mackey and Trudi Jacobson. The MOOC has engaged learners at the University at Albany, Empire State College and participants from around the world. Conceptualized as reframing information literacy, its open learning model positions information

literacy in relation to the social media environment and online communities in the 21st century, thereby promoting critical thinking, participatory learning, and metacognitive reflection through collaboration (Witek & Grettano, 2014).

There are core assumptions regarding formal higher education as a form of professional development in media literacy education. The first is that graduate degree and certificate programs, which offer structured learning experiences, support student learning in comfortable and familiar ways through structured participation, assignments, feedback and grades. We presume that specialized knowledge takes time and commitment to acquire. Another assumption is that people will pay to receive a credential such as a graduate degree or a certificate that reflects their learning accomplishment and has portability and market value. Further research is needed to understand how formal graduate education supports the development of leadership competencies that enable educators to become advocates for media literacy and change agents in their schools and communities.

### **Learning Communities**

Learning communities were developed within the media literacy community in the 1990s. Their founders recognized the value of coaching and mentoring to help teachers internalize the knowledge, skills and competencies they need to integrate

media literacy into K-12 education. In this regard, some universities, partnering with primary and secondary schools, engaged their undergraduate students, who worked directly with the children in their classrooms, to provide media literacy education. Although such programs may have real value to the participating teachers who were able to observe and occasionally to collaborate with the college students developing the lessons on media violence and other topics, the focus of these programs was generally on the learning outcomes of the students themselves, not on the staff (Scharrer, 2007).

The concept of learning communities is articulated by Wenger (1998), who notes that while we are all members of various communities of practice, learning within these communities results from interaction, not merely from planned learning episodes such as courses. One of the earliest reports of a university and K-12 school partnership emphasizing the professional development of K-12 teachers came from Billerica, Massachusetts, where Renee Hobbs created a comprehensive three-year program aimed at integrating media literacy concepts into grades K–12 in a working class community northwest of Boston. The most important component of the initiative was a long-term staff development program that resulted in the formation of a cadre of media literacy experts within the school district, a number of on-going cross-curricular programs, and a substantial amount of media analysis and production

activities which were integrated into the day-to-day lives of students and teachers (Hobbs, 1998).

Research on five of the many teachers who participated in the program revealed that teachers experienced profound personal and professional growth. Using video interviews, observations and the analysis of media productions created by the participants, Lesley Johnson (1997) examines changes to the teachers' attitudes, beliefs and behavior, discovering dramatic shifts in their self-concept from participating in the program. These are attributed to both the intimacy created by the learning community and the unique theoretical characteristics of media literacy because, "once one has acquired skills in understanding the codes and conventions of the media and has developed the skills with which to create media messages, he/she become a metaliterate consumer and creator of media text which enables us to aesthetically respond to 'the self' we experience ourselves in relationship to others and our culture" (Johnson, 1997, p.232).

Other approaches to learning communities have been used in media literacy education programs for teachers, including an *open-door* project where educators could participate for one or more days in a professional development program and observe classrooms where children were learning media literacy in an urban summer school environment; an in-school mentoring program where graduate student mentors

offered individual teachers (or small groups) instructional support and coaching in their own classrooms for a predetermined number of hours on a weekly basis; and a learning community, where a small group of teachers met with the authors once a month over the course of an academic year, and we helped them integrate media literacy into their curricula (Hobbs & Moore, 2013).

Professional development educators have made greater use of design-based models, where participants engage in developing curricular resources, lesson plans and project-based learning. Mentoring and coaching models and train-the-trainer models rely on the development of a relationship between the providers and the participants. Due to the diversity of assessment methodologies, it has been difficult to compare and evaluate the various models of professional development programs. Lawless and Pellegrino (2007, p. 601) note the limitations with using self-reported measures from participants to evaluate program effectiveness. They recommend that researchers use “new and more innovative approaches to collecting evidence and measuring change” to make evidence-based decisions about which forms of professional development are the most effective.

The characteristics of learning communities in media literacy typically include a demonstration of the model lessons, followed by theoretical framing, debriefing, analysis and reflection. Nonetheless, it is possible to build a bridge between theory

and practice through incomplete modeling rather than demonstrating a lesson in its entirety. A mini-lesson provides teachers with a feel for how the lesson will go when they experience it themselves as teachers. When combined with dialogue over how the lesson addresses or embodies a particular theoretical idea in media studies or education, and using a combination of pair-share, small group and large group discussion activities, participants “are encouraged to identify the assumptions, tacit goals and embedded values of the lesson,” opening up some rich dialogues as teachers “debate the merits and limitations of specific curricular choices and imagining how students of different ages might respond to similar learning activities” (Hobbs & Moore, 2013, p. 131).

There are core assumptions regarding learning communities and university partnerships with primary and secondary schools as forms of professional development. The central assumption is that teachers crave and benefit from deeply collaborative and personalized social learning environments. These offer intense relationships where trust and respect are activated in ways that encourage teachers to take risks and to try new things. Close collaborations inside the building—especially involving classroom teachers, school library media specialists and technology integration staff—are important to building capacity for media literacy education. Research on the influence of the Coalition of Essential School education reform has

shown how learning communities inevitably include tensions, uncertainty and divisiveness, even as teachers undergo dramatic shifts in their classroom teaching practices (Muncey & McQuillan, 1996). In addition, it is assumed that outside consultants, scholars or professionals are more effective change agents because of their relative distance from the institutional hierarchies and power politics that exist inside of the school organization.

Participating in a learning community requires a commitment of time and talent on the part of all of its stakeholders. Ethnographic research of schools participating in the Coalition of Essential Schools found that teachers who attempt to change their instructional practices experience increased workloads and a heightened sense of being pressed for time because the process of experimentation, professional self-reflection and more active involvement in school decision making can intensify feelings of being overloaded. Such feelings can sometimes lead teachers to disengage with a learning community even if it is perceived as valuable. Notably, however, even very valuable professional learning communities may not expand their scope. As Muncey and McQuillan (1996) explain, teachers attribute their personal and professional transformation to participation in learning communities even when they are unable to widen their advocacy to involve more teachers.

## **Concluding Remarks**

Each of the four approaches to professional development in media literacy have developed from activist educators, working inside or outside institutions who utilized the available resources to support the learning needs of educators. Further research is needed to more fully conceptualize and assess the impact of these and other programs. It will be particularly important to develop a deeper understanding of how blended and online learning in digital and media literacy may affect teachers' attitudes, knowledge, motivations and instructional practices.

Media literacy is a topic of growing interest in Europe, Asia and around the world. At the present time, it is unknown whether or not a cross-national approach to the professional development of teachers may be fruitful. Some pilot programs have been developed to explore this topic in Lebanon, Croatia and other countries. In the future, it will be important for media literacy educators to explore new forms of global and self-directed learning experiences that enable educators to develop the knowledge and skills needed to incorporate media literacy into the K-12 curriculum. Research conducted with K-12 teachers participating in one-to-one laptop programs revealed that the most engaged teachers use their time outside of school to develop new knowledge and skills (Moen, 2015). Rather than requiring teachers to participate in one-size-fits-all professional development, it may be more effective to promote

new approaches that validate teachers as both independent and social learners. As the field of media literacy education advances, efforts to evaluate the quality of professional development, moving beyond the level of participant satisfaction to include measures of real pedagogical influence, will be essential to the future of the field.

**Table 1**  
**Key Features, Assumptions and Examples of Professional Development in Media Literacy Education**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Key Features</b>	<b>Assumptions</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT</b>			
	Curriculum and multimedia resources curated and created by experts	Teachers lack expertise to create a curriculum but are good at finding it online	Common Sense Media
	Lesson plans designed around constructivist learning principles	Teachers will implement a curriculum with some fidelity	NAMLE Resource Hub
	Modular resources often designed around a content area, skill or theme	Online curriculum resources need to be fast, free and flexible	
	Designed to be “evergreen” yet responsive to contemporary media culture	High-quality curriculum materials take time and talent to develop	My Pop Studio Game and Lesson Plans
<b>TRAINING and CONFERENCES</b>			
	Short talks by experts who relay information and inspiration	People can and do translate their learning at conferences into their subsequent practice	National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE)
	Short talks by experts and educators who relay descriptive information about practices that work	Educators can evaluate the quality of PD they receive	Summer Institute in Digital Literacy
<b>LEARNING COMMUNITIES</b>			
	Groups of educators work together in a shared learning experience	Educators are lifelong learners	PBS Student Reporting Labs
	Media professionals, teachers and scholars bring different strengths when aiming for innovation	Educators are social learners and benefit from sustained and regular interaction	University of Massachusetts
	Case study reports or qualitative research supports reflective practice	Research offers benefits to practitioners	Digital Is (NWP)
	Twitter communities and Hangouts enable online learning	Some educators make time to participate in learning communities	
<b>FORMAL EDUCATION</b>			
	Graduate degree and certificate programs offer structured learning experiences	People will pay to receive a credential	Appalachian State University, New Media Literacies and Global Perspectives Master’s

University faculty offer learning experiences grounded in theory

Specialized expertise takes time to develop

Degree and Certificate Program

Graduate Certificate in Digital Literacy, URI

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