

Education in Audiovisual Communication: Perspectives and Proposals for Action in Catalonia

Fòrum d'entitats de persones usuàries de l'audiovisual

This article is a systemised approach to the problems regarding education in audiovisual communication (EAC). It starts with a definition of this concept, based on what was proposed by Unesco five years ago, and proposes the challenges for the concept that are involved in the boom of information and communication technologies (ICT).

A justification is then made of the need for education in audiovisual communication based on the demand for educational institutions to prepare citizens for the kinds of world they have to live in.

A brief description is given of the legislative framework of education in audiovisual communication focused fundamentally on its incidence in Catalonia.

Finally, some proposals for action are presented, structured around a series of areas of intervention: teacher training (initial and continued), inclusion in the curriculum of compulsory education, the figure of coordinator and school organisation, the production and dissemination of materials, the involvement of audiovisual communication media in EAC and, lastly, the continued education of citizens.

We should highlight one of the fundamental values of this document, namely the fact that it has been drawn up within the framework of the CAC (Catalonia Broadcasting Council) by the Forum of entities of audiovisual users, which means it has been approved by representatives of more than forty entities of Catalan civil society, entities interested in some way in audiovisual communication. Specifically, the document was approved by the full assembly of the Forum on the 10th of December 2004¹.

Education in audiovisual communication

Introduction

The concept of education in communication

According to the Unesco agreements in the seminar held in Seville in February 2002, education in communication (EC) should be approached from the following points of view:

- Education in communication means teaching and learning about communication media (as an object of study).
- Education in communication consists of critical analysis and creative production.
- Education in communication can and must take place within the area of formal education and non-formal education. Consequently, it must involve both children and adults.
- Education in communication must promote a spirit of community and social responsibility, as well as personal autonomy.

We talk of learning about communication media but with the knowledge that it is not merely a question of knowing the technologies but particularly the languages with which these are expressed, the communicative strategies and the content of its messages. It's a question of knowing audiovisuals as a differentiated means of expression and the implications of their social use.

Contemporary history cannot be understood without the communication media as a vehicle of social exchange and artistic expression, as a form of entertainment and as a transmitter of ideology and values. It is therefore essential

¹ In an appendix at the end of the article there is a list of the entities that form part of the Forum and that signed

for the education of citizens to include this area, both in terms of formal education and non-formal education.

This integration of education in communication must help to make all citizens media literate and help them to acquire skills and abilities that allow them to decode and produce texts in any kind of code and medium (a wide range known as ICT or information and communication technologies), particularly audiovisual technologies because these have most incidence on the population and, at the same time, are the least present in the educational system.

That's why the document approaches education in audiovisual communication from a dual perspective: audiovisuals as a subject of study (education in audiovisual communication) and as a resource for education (education with audiovisual communication). This document focuses basically on education in audiovisual communication, approached with the aim of providing people with instruments to understand the messages they consume both thoroughly and critically, and to provide them with the necessary resources to produce texts or discourses appropriate to different communication situations.

The structure of the document

The document is organised into three parts:

- a) Justification of the need for education in audiovisual communication.
- b) An outline of the legislative framework of education in audiovisual communication (EAC), focused mainly on its incidence in Catalonia.
- c) Proposals for action, structured around the following areas of intervention:
 - Teacher training (initial and continued).
 - Inclusion in the curriculum of compulsory education.
 - Figure of coordinator and school organisation.
 - Production and dissemination of materials.
 - Involvement of audiovisual communication media in EAC.
 - Continued education of citizens.

Justification of the need for EAC

It is paradoxical the contradiction between the importance in terms of socialising attributed by families and institutions to

television and the rest of the audiovisual mass media, and the presence these have on the school curriculum, i.e. very little, and in schools, almost zero, as well as with the agents and institutions of lifelong citizen education. It is equally paradoxical that, audiovisuals being a specific form of communication that is different from verbal, it has not warranted its own place in education.

Competence in critically interpreting audiovisual media is essential in order to understand the environment and to develop autonomy, personal creativity and social responsibility. Without training in this area, we cannot talk of citizens playing a full role in the societies of the 21st century.

This knowledge is essential for the following reasons:

- To explain how contemporary societies work, we also need to explain the expressive resources, economic and political mechanisms and communication strategies that belong to audiovisual media. This is basic knowledge that must be transmitted to avoid unconsidered consent, often favoured by the mass media, as well as to encourage the development of a capacity for individual interpretation and the training of a critical spirit, fundamental skills in order to be able to operate in the information society and to play a full part in the benefits of cultural heritage.
- The transmission of memory, another of the objectives of any educational project, is also impossible if citizens are not helped to:
 - be aware of the primordial role played by audiovisual media in the social transformations of the last few decades;
 - have access to the knowledge of work created by the audiovisual culture as from the end of the 19th century;
 - know how technology and audiovisual communication have developed in historical terms;
 - take into account that the discourses generated by audiovisual media have a significant documental value when analysing past and present societies.
- On the other hand, transmitting memory also means deciding which aesthetic experiences, related to the audiovisual culture, we want to pass on to new generations and to undertake the actions we must carry out in order to achieve this.

The legislative framework of EAC

Education in communication in Catalonia

The dizzying evolution in the world of communication over the last few decades and the economic, political and social changes deriving from this have not been, to date, suitably reflected in the educational system. Educational institutions have not responded to these changes. Curricula continue to be based, fundamentally, on the transmission of knowledge through the written language, completely forgetting that we live in a society where information, over-abundant and changing, is transmitted through multiple symbols and languages.

In Catalonia, the first educational experiences in cinema took place in the years of the Republic. Interest in audiovisual education as we know it dates back to the sixties outside schools and at universities, and it has a significant tradition. We have gone from the old demand to introduce cinematic language into schools in the sixties, seventies and eighties to the current debate on the inclusion of ICT.

However, the introduction of media and new technologies in formal and non-formal education has been slow and complicated. Successive educational laws and the latest educational reforms have not considered education in audiovisual communication as a priority issue in any case.

The General Education Act of 1970, which appeared at a time of clear expansion in the media, practically made no mention of audiovisual education or media education.

With the passing, in 1990, of the LOGSE (Act for the general organisation of the educational system), the priority goals established for the educational system were not only the acquisition of traditional content and knowledge but also education in democratic values, the acquisition of intellectual habits and the capacity to live an active life professionally, socially and culturally. With the inclusion of the *eixos transversals* or lines of action going across the curriculum (this including audiovisual education in Catalonia), the aim is to complement and update the traditional academic subjects and to connect schools with their environment. However, the LOGSE has been clearly insufficient in terms of specifying these measures and putting them into practice.

The passing of the Education Quality Act (LOCE) in 2002

made this situation worse. The decrees to apply the Act not only did not include audiovisual communication as an objective of basic education but its only references were as an accessory and, in the best of cases, audiovisual media were relegated to a secondary role as a didactic resource. Furthermore, it removed the little autonomy held by educational centres and reduced even further the room for manoeuvre for educators interested in these areas.

The new central government is currently planning a possible reform of the LOCE or even the formulation of a new educational act. With this aim, it has drawn up a document, submitted to public debate, outlining the main challenges facing education. Unfortunately, in this first document there is not a single reference to education in audiovisual communication, while it insists on the use of new technologies from a computer-based and purely instrumental point of view.

At the same time, the new Catalan administration is starting to propose the need to encourage education in audiovisual communication and, to this end, a specific programme has been created in the Department of Education.

Within this context, still quite deficient, the different initiatives that had appeared over the years related to the implementation of education in audiovisual communication, both from private organisations and public institutions and from particularly aware professionals in education and communication, have little room for manoeuvre. Given that they cannot be developed within the framework of formal education and with the necessary personal resources and materials, their proposals do not reach most of the school population.

But the fact that education in communication has not achieved the degree of implementation required in educational centres is not due only to the lack of a real space on the curricula, but also to deficiencies in teacher training. Only those teachers graduating from teacher training schools and faculties in the last decade have taken a specific course, *New technologies applied to education*, but often this subject is clearly biased towards computing. The same term, *information and communication technologies* (ICT) has helped to increase confusion between the technological dimension and the expressive or communicative dimension, almost always to the detriment of the latter two.

Proposals regarding teacher training

Introduction

Teacher training is one of the key elements of this document. Two aspects are important: on the one hand, knowledge of audiovisual language and of how mass media work (education in audiovisual communication), as well as the didactic capacity to educate students in this field. On the other hand, knowledge is also required in terms of technique, expression and didactic application of audiovisuals as a means or resource for teaching (education with audiovisual communication).

Short-term proposals

1. Ask universities to include a compulsory subject on audiovisual communication and education in the teacher training curriculum. This subject must emphasise the first of the two lines mentioned in the introduction but it must particularly work on the attitudes and awareness of teachers.
2. Add audiovisual communication and education as a subject of study in compulsory accreditation for secondary teachers, along the same lines as the previous recommendation.
3. Encourage education faculties to increase education with the media among the staff involved in teacher training courses, helping to increase sensitivity towards and awareness of this area.
4. Encourage universities, the Catalonia Broadcasting Council (CAC) and the Department of Education to continue creating audiovisual materials for primary and secondary teachers by means of established mechanisms, and to disseminate these materials as widely as possible.
5. Propose to universities, the Department of Education of the Generalitat de Catalunya, to movements demanding pedagogical renewal, the College of Doctors and Graduates and all those instances involved in the continued training of teachers to create proposals for training and to offer courses and seminars on audiovisual education.
6. Propose that the Department of Education promote projects of educational innovation to encourage the design and application of education in audiovisual

communication in primary and secondary centres.

7. Establish agreements between the Department of Education, the Catalonia Broadcasting Council (CAC) and the different public television operators to ensure that teachers have access to the documentary archive of images for educational use and at no additional cost.

In the long-term

The subject of audiovisual communication and education should not depend on the goodwill of universities but must form part of the core of the curriculum for the initial training of primary and secondary teachers.

Proposals with regard to the curriculum for compulsory education

Introduction

The inclusion of education in audiovisual communication must take very much into account the comprehension and analysis of the content of messages arriving via new technologies, as well as the expressive possibilities of these tools, and cannot be limited to encouraging a mastery of technology. Education in audiovisual communication must help to develop children and young people into becoming intelligent, critical and autonomous receivers. Its presence on the curriculum involves a global change in the approach to education and is of enormous help in educational innovation.

Proposals for action

1. The educational administration must incorporate EAC in compulsory curricula, in both its aspects: as a resource and as an object of study. It must do so by gathering together contributions from various collectives, organisations and people working in this area.
2. As a resource, audiovisual communication must take advantage of the expressive potential of images. It must have significant presence in learning activities as a form of differentiated communication and not as a simple illustration of words. It must lead to traditional methodologies being redesigned and must reinforce cooperative work, research, communication and critical spirit.
3. As an object of study, the content that must be worked

on in EAC, proposed in the international area (documents from Unesco, authors and collectives related to Media Literacy, etc.) and also contained in the basic ICT-EA competence document, drawn up by the Department of Education, is specified in the following dimensions:

- *Historical and social impact*: to see the impact produced by the media in current society, both in individual and collective terms, how they act on our emotions, how they condition and modify our habits and patterns of conduct and which values they transmit.
- *Agent of production*: to discover who produces these messages, what their interests and ideologies are, etc.
- *Literacy in the audiovisual language*: to discover the expressive resources used by audiovisual language and learn how to decode it.
- *Category of the media*: to observe the variety of audiovisual documents that exist and discover their characteristics.
- *Representation of the media*: to see how the media create a specific representation of reality.
- *Technological literacy*: to know the technology that makes audiovisual communication possible.

The appropriate aspects of this content must be included in the common part of the following areas: languages, visual and plastic aspects, social environment, technology and teaching.

4. EAC must not take an encyclopaedic approach, aimed at students accumulating information. It must be based on emotional impact involved in the experience of being a spectator, with the aim of gradually enriching this experience. It is necessary to know the cognitive dimension of emotions and to take advantage of the fun dimension of audiovisual media to help integrate pleasure and effort.
5. EAC must favour an interdisciplinary approach. In this respect, we believe that project work and workshops would be a good methodology for infant and primary education. For secondary education we propose that centres include a compulsory but variable credit for this area.
6. To strengthen and provide resources for centre projects aiming to work on EAC.

7. To promote, by zones, EAC integration projects, linked to the needs of the environment and to the proposals of the teachers working there.
8. To take advantage of initiatives arising from other entities (television channels, local radio stations, associations, specialised organisations) to establish collaborations, enrich and broaden projects.
9. The Department of Education and education science institutes must encourage the creation of specific working groups to reflect and make proposals on how EAC can be well integrated into the compulsory curriculum.
10. The Department of Education and universities must provide the public with the opportunity to experience EAC, with a selection of infant, primary and secondary centres ready to carry this out. Pedagogical resource centres could play an important part as promoters of these projects.

Proposals with regard to the figure of coordinator and school organisation

Proposals with regard to the figure of audiovisual coordinator

In order for the integration of education in audiovisual communication in compulsory education to be satisfactory, it is vital to create an audiovisual coordinator in all educational centres.

This figure must be understood as different from the IT coordinator, because they must be specialised in audiovisual communication and its teaching.

They must act in an advisory capacity in all departments. They must be responsible for promoting, planning, encouraging, experimenting, researching and evaluating the use made of audiovisuals by the educational centre, both in terms of education in audiovisual communication as well as in education with audiovisual communication.

The tasks that must be carried out by the audiovisual coordinator in the educational centre could be categorised as follows:

- Stimulate and advise teachers on the various areas or cycles to ensure that education in audiovisual communication is introduced into the educational centre

(teaching how to watch cinema, television, advertising, etc.): providing guidance on content, methodology, available materials, etc.

- Stimulate and advise teachers to ensure they use audiovisual communication resources in the schoolroom in order to optimise teaching-learning processes in all areas and cycles.
- Ensure the centre appropriately organises the equipment and materials so that they can be used easily and practically.
- Collaborate with those in charge of the centre's library and/or media library with regard to the acquisition of audiovisual documents, books and magazines on the area, and in the digital storing of audiovisual documents provided by teachers and students or found by the coordinator him or herself.
- Strengthen the use of audiovisual communication in both quantitative and qualitative terms. This can be done through a series of resources:
 - Programming courses to raise awareness or deepen knowledge.
 - Recommending courses or conferences on the area.
 - Advising on the usefulness of certain teaching materials.
 - Providing information on anything new on the market.
 - Recommending certain reading material (books, magazines, etc.).
 - Suggesting ways to use audiovisuals more creatively, etc.
- Evaluate the centre's use of audiovisuals, in different areas:
 - Investigate the effectiveness of these materials according to the various ways they can be used.
 - Compare performance in certain contexts.
 - Systemise certain types of use.
 - Analyse why audiovisual materials are used little in certain areas or levels.

It is evident that the audiovisual coordinator will require specific training, time and the consequent freeing up of his or her schedule and resources of all kinds in order to ensure he or she can carry out the work efficiently.

Proposals with regard to school organisation

Certain aspects of school organisation need to be reviewed to ensure that EAC contribute to innovation. If we want to encourage the creation of communicative environments we need educational spaces and timings that are different from the current set-ups.

We need school spaces that facilitate, on the one hand, the use of audiovisual communication tools for in-house production and, on the other hand, access to external productions, coming both from the professional field and from other centres. To this end rooms for audiovisual work are required, with video cameras and with the indispensable editing material and a well-equipped library and media library. Media must also be present in the schoolrooms in a continued and smooth manner.

Moreover, the organisation of the timetable must be flexible enough to be able to carry out learning activities across the curriculum, with the concurrence of teachers from different areas and with different groupings of pupils from those of the class group. Interdisciplinary projects must be able to be carried out in small groups different to the class group, and the timetables attributed to each area must not be so rigid as to become an obstacle to these projects having enough time to be carried out.

The people in charge of coordinating education in audiovisual communication, coordinating IT and the media library must form a team that ensures the educational goals are achieved, goals that should form a part of the centre's educational proposal.

Proposals with regard to the production and dissemination of materials

Introduction

There need to be materials available both for teachers and students at different levels to ensure education in audiovisual communication can be carried out, taking into account both formal and non-formal education contexts. It's important to be able to guarantee that these materials are suitable for contributing towards educational innovation. To this end, it is vital for the production of materials to be accompanied by experimentation and systematic evaluation.

The materials must provide for both aspects of EAC:

- Materials to work on the content of education in audiovisual communication, taking into account critical analysis and interpretation, as well as creation-production, on different media (written texts, multimedia material, etc.) and suitable for the areas and cycles where they are applied.

The production of materials to work on audiovisual media as an object of study should take the following dimensions into account:

- The social and historical impact of audiovisual media (consumption, reception, effects, etc.).
- The agents of production.
- The production process and technologies.
- Language.
- Categories: genres and formats of audiovisual media.
- How audiovisual media represent the social reality: how they select, mediate and show society (stereotypes, presences/absences, etc.).

Materials to make good use of audiovisuals resources, that provide methodological guidelines to be able to go beyond the typical function of image as a simple illustration of the word, guiding in terms of the possibilities of educational video, etc.

The materials produced must avoid encyclopaedic approaches and should therefore take the following aspects into account:

- They should be adapted to the age and needs of the pupils.
- They should encourage the observation and analysis of audiovisual messages and avoid theoretical discourses.
- They should encourage interdisciplinary aspects.
- They should strengthen pupils' creativity.
- They should be based on the interests of the pupils.
- They should motivate debate and encourage teamwork.

Proposals for action with regard to research and innovation

- Create specific lines of research at a university level aimed at experimentation related to the didactic aspects of audiovisual media.
- Encourage methodologies along the line of research-

action or research in practice to refine the instruments used in the education and didactic treatment of EAC.

- Through financial aid, to motivate creative proposals related to the production of materials.
- Promote studies or analyses of already existing materials to establish models with a view to producing new materials.

Proposals for action with regard to assessment

- Create control mechanisms to apply the relevant assessment techniques in the field of creating materials.
- Monitor the presence of EAC in centres and detect the obstacles hindering the achievement of the desired goals.

Proposals for action with regard to dissemination and network of resources

- Establish agreements with the media so that they can offer their resources as a way of complementing learning regarding the knowledge of culture and audiovisual production.
- Establish agreements with the media to provide a documentary archive of real media texts that are of use in education.
- Draw up and disseminate a list of basic works of audiovisual culture that should be available to all teaching centres, public libraries and media libraries.
- Prepare a database of materials produced by different institutions and groups to be placed at the disposal of media libraries in educational centres and pedagogical resource centres.
- Draw up guidelines and recommendations so that publishers or production houses can take on projects in this field.

Proposals regarding the involvement of audiovisual communication media in EAC

Introduction

The collaboration of the audiovisual media could be of significant help in putting into practice many of the initiatives proposed in this document. In order for this collaboration to be effective, we put forward the following proposals:

General proposals aimed at all audiovisual operators

- Encourage the necessary mechanisms so that their programming introduces education in audiovisual communication transversally (in all kinds of programmes) and helps TV viewers or radio listeners to receive the content critically.
- Create specific sections or programmes analysing the media from within and in which experts in audiovisual communication can take part, preferably related to the area of university education.
- Create an ombudsman for radio listeners and/or TV viewers at each media operator to channel the complaints and concerns of the audience. A person should be appointed who can take decisions independently, so as not to be subject to the operator's corporate line. This figure can be used to create programmes in which audience participation is encouraged and the ombudsman for radio listeners and/or TV viewers can answer and clarify any doubts regarding that medium's programming.
- Encourage visits by pupils and other social groups (parents of pupils, the elderly, citizen organisations, etc.) to the audiovisual operators' facilities with the aim of demystifying production and broadcasting processes. These visits should be complemented with didactic material.
- Reinforce and promote programmes aimed at connecting the academic world (school, university, etc.) with television.

Specific proposals aimed at local television and radio

- Through the different organisations made up of local radio and TV operators, promote collaboration agreements between these media and the educational centres in their area (municipality, county, etc.) in order to carry out activities of the following types:
 - Guided tours around facilities.
 - Radio and TV workshops aimed at pupils from different educational cycles. These workshops can also be aimed at people from other groups, such as the pupils' parents, homes for the elderly, householder associations, etc.
 - Regular radio and TV programmes made by pupils and broadcast by the same operator.

- Providing schools with audiovisual and sound material related to the immediate environment so that it can be used as a tool in the classroom.
- Establish mechanisms for using the TV and radio operators' audiovisual and sound archives on the part of the teachers and pupils at educational centres.

Proposals for the continued education of citizens

Introduction

The progressive but fast evolution of the forms of communication has not been experienced in the same way by the whole population. For the new generations, who have experienced this process since they were born, it is easy for them to adapt. But there is a whole sector of the population that has experienced this since adulthood and they often feel out of place and are not aware of the lack of training in this area, nor do they show any interest in it.

The need for continued training is also justified by the fact that technologies and forms of expression are continuously changing. And also because people's social roles are changing: as parents, as educators or as responsible adults, it is vital to know the power of the media as a source of education or *de-education*.

Proposals for action

1. Promote the need to incorporate EAC in the training activities of parent associations.
2. Encourage adult education organisations and those dedicated to children's leisure pursuits to include EAC content in the training they offer. To involve the different departments of the Generalitat in this training work.
3. Raise the awareness of a whole range of organisations and associations so that they include EAC content in their plans to train and inform their members and users.
4. Encourage the publication of articles to inform, raise awareness and train, in the periodical publications of the various organisations and associations that go to make up the Forum of entities.
5. Include, on the Forum of entities' website, an area aimed at EAC training for audiovisual users, highlighting relations with professionals, the knowledge of resources,

news, etc. This should become a place for exchanging information, suggestions, protests and recommendations to encourage knowledge and dialogue in the area.

6. Design objectives and methodologies for different training activities, from chats-colloquia to seminars or courses on a single subject, taking into account the different variables of age, cultural level, etc.

Appendix

List of entities, associations and organisations of the Fòrum d'entitats de persones usuàries de l'audiovisual

Catalan Consumer Affairs Agency (ACC)
 Association of Consumers of the Province of Barcelona (ACPB)
 Rosa Sensat Association of Teachers
 Promoting Association for Guidance on Consumption for the Elderly (PROGRAN)
 Association of Communication Users (AUC)
 Media Classroom. Education in Communication
 AIS Care and Research of Social Addictions
 College of Pedagogues of Catalonia
 Official College of Psychologists of Catalonia
 Confederation of the National Workers Committee of Catalonia (CCOO)
 Coordinator of Health Users (CUS)
 Department of Education. Educational Innovation Programmes Service
 Department of Audiovisual Communication and Advertising (UAB)
 Department of Journalism and Audiovisual Communication of the UPF
 Magical Dragon
 Higher School of Cinema and Audiovisuals of Catalonia (ESCAC)
 Blanquerna Faculty of Communication Science of the URL
 Faculty of Educational Science of the University of Lleida
 Faculty of Business and Communication of the University of Vic

Blanquerna Faculty of Psychology, Education Science and Sport of the URL
 Federation of Associations for the Elderly of Catalonia (FATEC)
 Federation of Associations of Parents of Pupils of Catalonia (FAPAC)
 Federation of Cooperatives of Consumers and Users of Catalonia (FCCUC)
 Federation of Movements for Pedagogical Renewal of Catalonia
 Group of Catalan Entities (GEC)
 Catalan Institute for Women (ICD)
 Institute of Science and Education of the University of Barcelona (ICE)
 MITJANS. Network of Educators and Communicators
 Observatory of Women in the Media
 European Observatory of Children's Television
 Observatory of the coverage of Conflicts in the media
 Organisation of Consumers and Users of Catalonia (OCUC)
 Journalist Trade Union of Catalonia (SPC)
 Teleeduca, educació i comunicació, S.C.P
 Associated Television Viewers of Catalonia (TAC)
 Local Television Channels of Catalonia
 Union of Consumers of Catalonia-UCC
 Workers Trade Union of Catalonia (USOC)
 General Union of Workers of Catalonia (UGT)
 USTEC-STEC