

Editorial

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Media Education: An International Unstoppable Phenomenon. The Work of the UN, Europe and Spain in the Field of Edu-communication

La educación mediática, un movimiento internacional imparable. La ONU, Europa y España apuestan por la educomunicación

Dr. J. Ignacio Aguaded-Gómez

Despite the fact that media education scarcely appears reflected in school curricula all over the world, it is becoming more necessary in our societies. As Vallet stated decades ago, communication is the air we breathe; and it is therefore essential to train and educate the new generations to understand the new languages and its new active and recreational learning processes, codes and discourses to be implemented by the educative authorities in each country.

Media education should be also approached from other perspectives. The role of families as main educators and the media itself have a decisive edu-communicative influence on the children, as well as civil society and the citizenship in democratic societies. The citizenship should take part in associations and organizations with the aim to build a responsible and critic society in which the power of the media is increasingly pervasive.

The importance of media education at an international level is an indisputable reality. Since the 70s, some organizations such as the UNESCO have claimed the importance of media education as a transverse discipline which requires specific attention in school curricula, in teachers training, in family education, and should be also addressed to adults, the elderly, housewives, unemployed people, etc.

Today, with more organizations involved (European Parliament, European Commission and UN-Alliance of Civilizations- UNAOC Program) new actions and strategies are being implemented. An outstanding initiative by the Media Literacy Education Program (MLE) is a web portal called «Clearinghouse» (www.aocmedialiteracy.org), with more than 2500 registered users each month, with a wide range of resources, information and material available.

UNAOC also develops a multicultural project of video graphic production «Plural+», aimed at the elaboration of audiovisual products by young people all over the world, focusing on thematic areas related to migration, diversity and social inclusion (www.unaoc.org/pluralplus). UNAOC also works on a platform in «Media Literacy» in partnership with advisers, teachers and researchers from the five continents. The final design will be presented in Doha (Qatar) during the «Global Junior Challenge» (www.gjc.it/2011/en), to be held as a next step after the «I International Forum on Media and Information Literacy», held last May 2011 in Fez (Morocco) (www.flis-usmba.ac.ma) and after the «World Summit on Media for Children and Youth» (Karlstad, Sweden), co-organized with Nordicom.

Another remarkable initiative is «Mapping Media Education in the World», a publication released by UNAOC in collaboration with Grupo Comunicar. This publication has been distributed worldwide, presenting the most meaningful experiences in media education found in different countries.

At a European level, many experiences are being developed supported by the guidelines presented by the European Parliament, focusing on the implementation of edu-communicative policies in all educative systems. We would like to mention five countries in particular: Belgium, United Kingdom, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

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Under the umbrella of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, more than 300 experts from 30 countries gathered at the end of 2010 in the Conference «L'Éducation aux Médias pour tous», organized by the «Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation aux Médias de la Communauté française de Belgique». This meeting was decisive to emphasize the importance of media education in Belgium and in the European Union. As a result, a declaration was released, the «Déclaration de Bruxelles pour l'éducation aux Médias tout au long de la vie» (www.declarationdebruxelles.be). This document is a clear and precise declaration that can be signed by any European citizen. Média Animation actions in Belgium are decisive for boosting media education in the country.

By the end of 2010 another important meeting took place in the UK. The «Media Literacy Conference» (MLC 2010) contributed to lay the foundations for future works on media education in the UK. Due to the economic crisis, the next meeting to be held in Nottingham will be postponed, but the Media Education Association (MEA), together with the Centre for the Study of Children, Youth & Media (CSCYMN) and the prestigious British Film Institute (BFI) continue carrying out activities on this field.

In Italy, the MED (Associazione Italiana per l'Éducatione ai Media e alla Comunicazione) has started to release «Revista Education» and is also organizing training activities along the country.

At the beginning of 2011, an important national conference took place in Portugal: «Literacia, Media e Cidadania». Educative authorities, the media, universities, research centres, teachers and other agents were gathered in this conference. Despite the economic crisis, this meeting was essential to discuss the implementation of future actions.

Finally, in Spain, generally, media education remains a pending task. Even if there are more and better qualified researchers and teachers working everyday on media education and the researches and publications evidence the necessity to teach and learn the media, our current curricula, the educational TV, and our control boards are still far from the outcome reached in other European and American countries. However, in 2011, two exceptional events on the field of media education took place in Spain: the «I Congreso de Alfabetización Mediática», organized by the Gabinete de Comunicación y Educación de la Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona: this initiative became an international forum for reflection with a remarkable representation of Arabic, European and American cultures. On the other hand, the «Congreso de Educación Mediática y Culturas Digitales», held in Segovia and organized by the Universidad de Valladolid and other organizations (among them, Grupo Comunicar). This innovative conference has been a turning point to re-activate in Spain the discussion on media education as a crucial element in the daily life of citizens.