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MEDIA LITERACY AND NEW HUMANISM

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Foreword

UNESCO was designed to contribute to peace and security by promoting international collaboration through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, the rule of law and the human rights. The first Director-General of UNESCO Sir Julian Sorell Huxley coined the human-centred philosophy of the newly created international organisation as evolutionary humanism[1]. UNESCO was established sixty-five years ago, but this humanistic framework still remains relevant. However, recent political, economical and social processes necessitated an update of the concept for the age of globalization. According to UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova, *new context demands that the conditions necessary for mutual understanding and peace-building be rethought. Changes in the world call for the development of a new humanism that is not only theoretical but practical, that is not only focused on the search for values — which it must also be — but oriented towards the implementation of concrete programmes that have tangible results*[2]. The idea of 'new humanism' has become a new credo for UNESCO. Being applied to education, it suggests *the creation of a more inclusive society in which all humans have a chance to access knowledge* and quality education and every voice is heard in the universal dialogue. *New humanism in the global society must prioritise a new sense of respect for multiplicity and cultural diversity and must support media development with the goal of consolidating the new culture of peace*.

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[1] Huxley, Julian S. (1946). *UNESCO: Its Purpose and Its Philosophy.*

[2] Bokova, Irina (2010). *A New Humanism for the 21st Century.* UNESCO. P. 2.

Education is strongly influenced by the processes emerging within the society, by intellectual, philosophical and political movements. In the past the humanists' approach had the most lasting impact on education, initiated innovation in school curriculum and pedagogical methods. Current advances in information technologies and propagation of new digital media and learning environments stipulate the increasing importance of media literacy, which is today recognized almost universally as one of the key competences in the educational system. The main objective of the study commissioned by the UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education to Tapio Varis (University of Tampere, Finland) and José Manuel Pérez Tornero (Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain) was to investigate digital and media literacy in the context of educommunication and new humanism that is *committed to the goal of counteracting the depersonalising effects of mass technology*. The study was initiated to provide a deeper insight into the recent trends in the development of media culture and media literacy movement, and to provide conceptual framework for media literacy, new media literacy curriculum and teacher training.

The monograph combines educational philosophy discourse and educational research approaches. The authors adhere to the definition of the media literacy as *'the process of assimilating and using the codes involved in the contemporary media system as well as the operative skills needed to properly use the technological systems on which these codes are based'* and as '*the capacity to access, analyse and evaluate the power of the images, sounds and messages with which we are faced every day and which play an important role in contemporary culture. It includes the individual capacity to communicate using the media competently. Media literacy concerns all media, including television, film, radio and recorded music, the press, the Internet and any other digital communication*

technology... They share the idea that media literacy is a basic skill, one that supports many others and that it therefore should not solely be taught as a specific field of knowledge, nor simply as a skill, nor as a collective practice.

Considering media literacy from intercultural perspective, the authors describe its role in the world where the notion of the uniqueness of each civilization as an isolated, self-sufficient entity is no longer valid: *Humanity must force the media system as a whole to shoulder the obligation to stimulate this intense intercultural relation that the global world demands of us. We must force it to act as an interpreter and translator — cultural translation — among all of humanity's diverse codes: between our codes and the codes of the Other. In other words, the goal is to align the entire media system with the obligation to make a systematic effort at mutual understanding among all the collectives, peoples, societies and communities in this global world.* On the basis of the analysis of the recent UNESCO, EC and other initiatives in media literacy, Varis and Pérez Tornero formulated basic principles of an agenda intended to strengthen the contribution of media literacy to intercultural dialogue.

The book "Media Literacy and New Humanism" informing educators, researchers, policy-makers, the media and civil society about the opportunities that media literacy opens up in the world of global communication and education and how the potential born by the ICTs can improve access and quality of education appears at a very opportune moment.

Dendev Badarch
UNESCO IITE Director a.i.

Chapter 1

TECHNOLOGICAL CIVILISATION AND MEDIA CULTURE

Understanding our civilisation

We understand *civilisation* as a specific state of *technical development* that corresponds to a specific evolution in the *manmade environment* in which humanity operates and is supported by a given set of knowledge, codes, languages, skills and intellectual capacities related precisely to this manmade environment. These intellectual capacities are known in their broad sense as *culture*[1] and we will call the shift from one state of civilisation to another *evolution in the civilising process*.

So, if we had to define our age right at the threshold of the 21st century based on these concepts, we would have to say that it is:

a) a *technological civilisation* based on the digitalisation of information,
b) a *media culture* organised around the media and its convergence, and that it is subjected to
c) an extremely rapid process of civilising evolution that is only gaining momentum.

The key to this state of affairs must be sought in the fact that, during the last few years of the 20th century and the early years of the 21st century, digital technologies and the new

[1] We understand culture to include any development of knowledge: scientific, philosophical, everyday, religious, etc.

media (ICT)[2] have come to occupy the epicentre of our lives. They are thus a key factor in this specific civilising stage.

They are responsible for having constructed the *hypertechnological manmade environment* in which almost all people and objects have been endowed with a kind of *digital interface,* so we work, live and interact in a digitally enriched environment, in a kind of digital bubble.

They are what have imposed many of the languages, codes, conventions and interactive systems among people. And they are what are triggering the emergence of a *media culture* in which all kinds of knowledge — both scientific and everyday, both languages and conventions — seem to be either directly or indirectly influenced by the constant flow of messages and signs that the *media* put into circulation.

They are ultimately what have imposed such a rapid pace of transformation and an unstable condition on all of the systems making up our civilising stage that *accelerated and constant change* has become the dominant climate in all spheres of life. For centuries, the shift from one stage of civilisation to another happened constantly yet gradually and in an unhurried, almost imperceptible way, but in recent centuries this change seems to have accelerated suddenly. Some experts claim that today a single generation has to handle more changes in manmade environments in their lifetime and consequently more changes in knowledge systems and capacities, that is, changes in culture, than many previous generations combined. It is thus that we have come to talk about the *shock of change*[3] to describe the force of its

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[2] The two summits on the Information Society held by UNESCO (Geneva, 2003 and Tunis, 2005) confirmed that the Information Society was on the agenda of almost all of the countries in the world.

[3] Toffler (1995).

impact, the *liquid life*[4] to highlight the instability it produces and the *corrosion of character*[5] to refer to the consequences of this change on the human psyche. Therefore, the most characteristic feature of our specific, current civilising stage seems to be instability, change and the risk associated with this change.

How has this new technical mediation come about and what consequences is it having? What do this *technological civilisation* and this *media culture* consist of? If we want to understand our situation and take control of it, we have to try to find proper answers to these questions.

Let us use an image. In recent years, the digitalisation of information and the proliferation of remote media have generated a kind of *nuclear chain reaction* with an unheard of impact all over the planet. This explosion has profoundly altered our system of life. It is an *explosion of information, communication and interaction* among people. This explosion is reaching exponential growth — in both size and complexity — and has had a forceful impact on all human structures that have survived until today, subjecting them to an inexorable mutation.

This chain reaction in the amount of information and communication has had a direct impact on three essential dimensions of human life: *communicative energy, time* and *space*. And it has transformed them in a profound, irreversible way.[6]

With it, humanity's current culture, that is, its communication system, has changed decisively. The result is a *light* system of

[4] Bauman (2006).

[5] Sennett (1999).

[6] Except for the event of a civilising collapse, which should in no way be discounted. Cf. Rees (1969).

communication capable of overcoming the limitations that used to be imposed by the use of energy; an *instantaneous* system equipped to overcome the restrictions of time; and a *global* system that is determined to overcome the previous spatial limitations. In this way, the concept and reality of communication has changed profoundly. We are faced with a new kind of communication.

We call it *light* communication because, although for many centuries communication was a complex, costly process that required an exceptional expenditure of energy, at the dawn of the 21st century communicating and moving began to be easier, less costly[7] and much more efficient.

We say *instantaneous* communication because communication *time* has ceased to involve *waiting* and *delay* to become a kind of Borgian Aleph point[8] where what prevails is *simultaneity*. While for centuries communication *time* was inflexible and slow, now in contrast it is *rushed* and *malleable* (flexible), so much so that it tends towards instantaneity at the will of the user.

And finally, we use the term *global* communication because, while the *space* of communication used to be a limited local day, today it is becoming infinite and global.

Here are several examples: today it costs much less to publish a message universally via the Web (Internet) than it used to

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[7] One of the main effects of these new technologies has been a drastic reduction in the cost and time needed to store, process and transmit information. These impressive changes in price relations have had a profound effect on how we organise the production and distribution of goods and services and ultimately on work itself. This evolution is transforming work, the structures of qualifications and the organisation of companies, ushering in a fundamental shift in the labour market and in society as a whole (Commission of the European Communities, 1996, p. 9).

[8] One of the points in space that contains all other points. (Borges, 1945).

cost to send a letter via post in the 16th century. A mediaeval monastic manuscript was much heavier than today's external memory drive (USB), even despite the fact that the latter contains infinitely more information than the former. A peasant in the Middle Ages would only ever venture a few hundred kilometres from home in his entire lifetime, whereas the 19th century citizen could travel thousands; the 20th century citizen multiplied this amount by thirty, and the 21st century citizen will do so by an even larger exponent (Zumthor, 1984, p. 164).

The stages of communicative change

In history there have been three major phases of change in communication and this change affected the three dimensions mentioned above: *energy, time* and *space.*

The first phase, which took place over the course of centuries and dovetailed with the expansion of the ancient empires, was grounded upon certain transportation techniques, namely animals and the wheel, but it culminated in the discovery of new intellectual technologies: writing and arithmetic.[9] This gave rise to major invasions and migrations from the lands of ancient China to Rome. It opened up major routes that plied the lands from East to West. Along the way, the communicative energy improved, communication time was stepped up and space was somehow reduced. However, from today's perspective, the movements appear very tentative.

[9] Carts and animals made exploration, trade and migration possible. Through arithmetic, the process of exchange among communities and accounting improved immensely. Likewise, writing — either ideographic or phonetic — contributed to the "memorisation" of experiences, enriched humans' historical awareness and enabled some of individuals' mental faculties to be expanded.

The second phase, starting around 1400, particularly dovetailed with the expansion in maritime transport, namely the discovery of new navigation and cartography instruments and techniques,[10] and with the development of the book and the consequent spread of printing in Europe, which in turn fostered an expansion in the tales that intellectually promoted the adventure of "discoveries" and "new worlds".[11] These transformations proliferated; the cultural climate generated vast successive critical movements in the West, including the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Enlightenment. The world began to resemble what it is today. But the vast compression of energy, time and space of our age had not yet taken place.

The third phase became explosive and it has been taking place since World War II until today. It dovetails with the *information explosion* and the *communications revolution* — electricity, digitalisation, information technology and telecommunications. New languages and codes are emerging, as are new instruments for processing and spreading information, and a considerable step has been made toward mobility and flexibility in transport and the circulation of goods, people and information. This process, which we can

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[10] Which led the Portuguese to expand their trade routes along the coasts of Africa and the Spaniards (and Portuguese) to "discover" America and establish new maritime routes with the East. The printing press helped expansion into these new worlds.

[11] In this way, awareness of the world was expanded and at the same time there was greater cognizance of the diversity of this world. This period was called the "Modern Age" in Europe because it brought about innovations in traditional ways of living. It began with the "Renaissance", which promoted a cultural revamping through a critical revival of Greco-Latin values, often with the concurrence of Arabic and Hebrew culture. Humanity thus seemed to foster its capacity to expand itself and acquire a new awareness of universality. In fact, it was the recovery of an energy that led it to overcome barriers and boundaries, which had also taken place in the early phase of globalisation with the expansion of vast empires.

encapsulate with the name *digital revolution,* has radically transformed the way humanity establishes relationships among its members: from now on, these relationships will be universal. A key factor in this is the exploitation of fossil fuels and nuclear energy in both automotives and aviation and the *digitalisation* of information and its application to all walks of life.

Through these phases, we have arrived at our current technological civilisation and our own media culture.

New cultural chemistry, new humanity

This new hypertechnological environment, this deepening of communicative globalisation, has not only altered the way we perceive and use time and space, it has also changed the *chemistry* of our everyday life and our culture. As was said above, it has generated a kind of multiple chain reaction that has affected our entire way of living.

If everyday life used to consist of *routine* and *tradition* forged by customs, today, in the era of global communication, everyday life has become *transitory* and *provisional.* It is undergoing a constant process of change and adaptation. This ever-changing life is accepted not only by individuals but also by large publics that, in perpetual connection, have already become the real social subjects.[12] As a result, the culture has felt the pull of change. It has stopped being a fixed, structured reference and instead become unstable and moving, with a consequent impact on the processes of constructing personal identities. Likewise, it has stopped corresponding to a local, community worldview to morph into *navigating in a global world.* Thus, it tends to become a

[12] The appearance of social networks and the roles that individuals are beginning to adopt within them seem to prove this.

kind of disorderly, mobile *collage*,[13] a kind of ever-changing mosaic with hardly any internal coherence, bereft of firmness, wandering around a global world.

As Bauman has written, our (everyday) life has abandoned the solidity of the past and become *liquid*.[14] The global communication society seems to correspond to a rushed life of *nomadism*. And this *liquid life* seems to come with the obligatory wrapping of a *mosaic*, disorderly, incoherent and mobile culture. Perhaps as a result of this, new subjects and new social personalities are emerging that are direct derivations of the media weaving and unravelling: huge conglomerates of publics connected via flexible mobile networks that are increasingly sophisticated and active, and hence a kind of personality dominated by "being alone together".[15]

This new life and cultural chemistry fostered by the acceleration of the rapid configuration of huge, changing publics is in fact generating chain reactions of an unheard of scope and complexity that we are still far from being able to grasp. It is affecting our environment, our culture and also our way of being individuals, our way of framing ourselves as human beings.

Perhaps we are not prepared to wholly explain the change, but we must examine it because it affects all the dimensions of our existence. Perhaps this is an unprecedented mutation that will not only affect our environment but also decisively influence our psyche and our character. That should come

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[13] The idea of contemporary culture as collage has multiple echoes from A. Moles' idea of cultural mosaic to Tourain's propositions on mixing, selection and crossbreeding as components of the everyday culture of today.

[14] The metaphor was coined by Zygmunt Bauman, *Vida Líquida*.

[15] An expression coined by Sherry Turkle (2010), which seems to paraphrase Riesman's concept of "lonely crowds".

as no surprise. The mechanism of transformation through which the evolution in the civilising process operates has the virtuality of transforming both the manmade environment around human beings and their interior, that is, their intellectual capacities and mental skills.

When human beings develop, invent or generate an instrument, that is, a technique, they do so to support, reinforce or replace a given *human function*. In fact, this instrument serves to multiply or extend humans' skills and capacities. Ponder, for example, the use of stone by primitive human beings. Stone was used to extend the hand's function and increase its strength. In this way, stone allowed humans to build new objects that enriched the manmade environment and at the same time it prompted the development of new skills and capacities. As these new objects multiplied and humanity became used to them, human beings gradually felt obligated to specialise in developing the skills that the objects — their use and manufacture — allowed. Thus, the transformation of the environment and the transformation of skills became interdependent and fuelled each other. The surrounding physical reality, technological environment and mental faculties changed in unison.

At a specific point in history, there is a civilising stage that comes through a repertoire of *technical instruments*. With them, humans shape a given *manmade environment* and based on both, a *model of skills and human habits* is developed. Thus, in the agricultural age, for example, this technical repertoire would be made up of all of the instruments suitable for making the land productive, caring for the livestock and living there, including farm implements, huts, villages and beasts of burden. The set of all of these factors, always in combination with the natural setting, and the corresponding social organisation would establish the manmade environment that, in this case, we will call rural: villages, fields, forests and

production relations. And this environment would in turn correspond to certain personal capacities that would affect both the *practices*, such as cultivating the land, harvesting, caring for the animals and moving through the forests, and the *intellect,* such as the capacity to understand and perceive certain variations in the natural environment. By contrast, for example, in the industrial age this environment would correspond to a technical repertoire, including steam and other kinds of machines, metal tools and smelting ovens; an *urban, manufacturing environment* made up of cities, factories, streets, automobiles and electrical lights; and finally a set of specific capacities related to it, such as the scientific and technical methods developed, mass manufacturing and a given perception of time and duration.

In any event, the convergence of technical development, manmade environment and capacities ends up modelling the human beings' cognitive dimension, changing their perceptions and intellectual attitudes, and altering their character and personality. Therefore, the *civilising process* is not a simple change in elements external to humanity that combines with a human personality that remains unaltered over the centuries. Rather it is a complex system of relationships in which the human psyche, character and personality are yet another factor among many.

When we talk about technological civilisation and media culture, it is therefore to discuss this complex system of factors and processes through which humanity is building itself in terms of information and communication. In it, the communicative devices and new media are increasingly taking on the physical and social personality of humans, creating artificial prosthetics that extend, amplify and specialise our senses and mental capacities and their driving activities.

Chapter 2

A NEW MEDIA AWARENESS

Awareness of technological change

Having reached the current state of our hypertechnological environment, technological civilisation and media culture, *gaining awareness* of the meaning of technical progress and being able to properly assess it are crucial. However, this need to gain awareness of technology is a human concern that has somehow existed for many years and every period of history humanity has attempted it in different ways.

In one of his dialogues, Plato introduces Socrates by bringing up this topic. He refers to the purported dialogue between a civil authority, Thamus, and an *inventor*, Theuth, who shows the former his inventions one by one. To Theuth, all of the arts — instruments — that he presents are positive and would contribute to improving human beings.[16] However, the sceptical Thamus keeps asking him, one by one, about the advantages and disadvantages of each invention. In this way, the conclusions that he reaches about the impact of the technologies are not always positive. The scene is introduced by Plato in the following way and he particularly focuses on one new technology, writing:

> *To him came Theuth and showed his inventions, desiring that the other Egyptians might be allowed to have the benefit of them; he enumerated them, and*

[16] We note here that the idea of constant, positive progress is not an idea that began with Turgot and the men of the Enlightenment; rather it amply predates them.

> *Thamus enquired about their several uses, and praised some of them and censured others, as he approved or disapproved of them. It would take a long time to repeat all that Thamus said to Theuth in praise or blame of the various arts. But when they came to letters, This, said Theuth, will make the Egyptians wiser and give them better memories;* ***it is a specific both for the memory and for the wit****. Thamus replied: O most ingenious Theuth,* ***the parent or inventor of an art is not always the best judge of the utility or inutility of his own inventions*** *to the users of them. And in this instance, you who are the father of letters, from a paternal love of your own children have been led to attribute to them a quality which they cannot have;* ***for this discovery of yours will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories****; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves. The specific which you have discovered is an aid not to memory, but to reminiscence, and you give your disciples* ***not truth, but only the semblance of truth****; they will be* ***hearers of many things and will have learned nothing****; they will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome company, having the show of wisdom without the reality*[17].

The text must be placed in context. Classical Greece made profound use of the invention of writing to record its oral memory and experience. That is when the art of the rhapsodists — who practised their profession through

[17] Plato, The Dialogues of Plato, vol. 1, translated into English with Analyses and Introductions by B. Jowett, M.A. in Five Volumes. 3rd edition revised and corrected (Oxford University Press, 1892). Chapter: PHAEDRUS. Accessed from http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/111/39485/877451 on 2010-12-27.

the word — transformed into graphic signs; that is when philosophy and science earned the help of transcription. We know today that this shook Greek life and gave it a vitality and impetus that still lasts today (Popper, 2006), triggering a vast revolution in philosophy, science and knowledge. Therefore, Plato wrote about a thoroughly timely topic and an invention, writing, whose vast subsequent transcendence even could not be imagined. And it is at this precise moment when Socrates' dialogue, which Plato claimed to be transcribing, dared to question technical progress and became capable of questioning it, posing objections to it and analysing some of its possible negative consequences.

After many centuries, could we not do the same, perhaps with similar categories, for the meaning of the Internet, for example? Might the Internet be a distant derivation of the invention of writing; does it not place knowledge and wisdom that, until recently, were limited to a few within the reach of almost anyone? Is it perhaps not as decisive a revolution as writing, but one whose consequences might be contradictory or at least controversial?

If so, then it is worth considering the Platonic gesture of inquiry and examination of technological progress and questioning its effects and consequences.

Yet let us revisit the context. Generally speaking, when a new technology — a new *contraption* — emerges, and this happens quite frequently, we tend to adopt what we could call a *Theuth-like attitude*: we assume that *technology* equals *progress.*[18] However, from a historical perspective, technological developments have not always been positive.

[18] This attitude is connected to the scientific and technological tradition that spans from Bacon to Smith and includes Saint-Simon; it has become a hallmark of productivity society.

They have ushered in both good and evil. Obviously technologies can be used to prevent illness, such as water purification systems, or to massacre entire peoples, such as the atomic bomb. Sometimes they even produce paradoxical effects: seeking good while ultimately producing evil. One example is how the use of oil made transport more efficient, yet it also threatens to ruin the planet's climate.

The same can hold true with the so-called *intellectual technologies,* although their consequences can be regarded as more ethereal and vaporous. According to Plato's dialogue, for example, writing can lead to *wisdom* (Theuth) or to its opposite: ignorance that is ignorant of itself — *apparent wisdom,* uneducated erudition (Thamus). And extending that reasoning, perhaps the entire communication revolution today can contribute to this false awareness of knowledge with no depth and no truth.

In any event, when technology becomes our living environment, what attitude is the most worth recommending in light of technological innovation: Theuth's of positively trusting any innovation or Thamus' critical and sceptical attitude?

Regardless of its convenience, all indications point to the fact that our society has adopted Theuth's attitude. *Trusting of* technology, it accepts a kind of axiom that states that every technical development is positive. Thus, it seems to have *deified* or *naturalised* technology. And so, without quite realising it, we are probably subordinating humans to the often uncontrolled designs of technical progress.

Is this, in essence, a kind of fatalism with regard to the future? Is not it accepting that only technology affects our lives? Are we not regarding it as a factor independent of our will? Are we not, then, de facto giving up our ability to conduct and direct it?

Perhaps due to impotence or a lack of diligence, we are allowing ourselves to be led by the designs of an apparent new Leviathan, technology, and what might earn the name of technocracy. The question is even more intractable. Perhaps in order to facilitate our optimism, we have gotten used to the idea that technology holds a great capacity for social change, yet at the same time we tend to conceal the fact that we have neither the disposition nor the capacities to lead technological development along pathways that do not put humanity at risk. For this reason, we cannot help but suspect that the technical utopia with which we have constructed, for example, the idea of the communication revolution or the Information Society is nothing more than a kind of alibi for our true impotence to conduct the planet's fate toward human ends. Might this technical utopia be a mirage? Might we have converted to a *technological religion* (Noble, 1999) and agreed to be its *preachers*? If this is so, we would probably have to say that humanity has begun to lose faith in itself, its trust in human beings themselves...

It may seem to be a slight exaggeration, but when the discourses that conduct our society, the *communication revolution* or the *Information Society* — laden with rhetoric, promises and forced hopes — are considered, everything seems to indicate that indeed perhaps we tend to accept any technological progress without questioning it. Perhaps we have thus anaesthetised our critical conscience.

However, if we have to examine history, which is full of evident progress but also major steps backward, it would be worth keeping a critical attitude closer to that of Thamus.

Humanity should govern the development of technology instead of technology governing the development of humanity. This step is necessary for a minimal awareness of our technological environment.

Ambivalence of the Information Society

Faced with the undoubted complexity of the process of constructing this new media society and culture, the response has generally been a discourse that is barely critical and often excessively simple and reductionist and frequently one that simply justifies and legitimises the existing conditions.

At times, the function of structuring society and the economy and the capacity to organise all aspects of a human being's everyday life have been attributed to technology and science. One expression of this, for example, as Van Dijk (2006, p.19) explains, is the fact that our society is based on "science in rationality and in reflexivity", that the economy is based on the "production of information", that the job market is also based on "information processing" and "higher education" and finally that the culture is dominated by the "media and its corresponding products".

However, a more complete view of the phenomenon enables us to find at least some debatable points in it.

If *science* and *reflexivity* in theory have been imposed on our social organisation, why have we nonetheless seen the so-called *war on terrorism* serving to foster a discursive economy revolving around fear and the lack of rationality? Or if science theoretically prevails, why are we seeing obscurantist and fanatical beliefs and ideologies[19] — a far cry from the scientific spirit — fostering the emergence of new extremisms and fanaticisms?

If the economy, in theory, has been organised around information, why is it that the lack of transparency is pre-

[19] From creationism to all kinds of religious fanaticisms and aggressive ideologies and violence shrouded in nationalism or racism and ethic clashing.

cisely what caused the bursting of the financial bubbles in the crises of 2000 and 2007? [20]

If the economy is theoretically based on the production of information, why has it not yet been able to dissolve the existence of large pockets of people living in an almost slave-like system of exploitation, some of them precisely at the service of the large technological corporations that dominate the Information Society?

In short, the situation is ambiguous. It is obvious that the promises of rationality and science are stronger than ever, but it is also clear that the sources of irrationality have not been eradicated and that the aggressiveness and violence inherent within them still prevail in many aspects of day-to-day life in our societies.

Yet paradoxically, we have been incapable of preventing any of this despite the emergency of a media culture that promises transparency and information. We have been incapable of generating greater perceptiveness in world public opinion or of bolstering its degree of lucidity. On the contrary, the deepening of the process of *hypertechnologisation* and *media civilisation* has at times produced bursts of aggressive and irrational beliefs and ideologies in the broader context of a consumer, escapist, uncommitted culture. We are far from having responded to the transcendence of the changes with proper awareness of them.

Media consciousness and the new humanism

For all of these reasons, reflection on or a questioning of the consequences of technological developments and, in short,

[20] An economic crisis that started in 2007 with the failure of some of the most important banks in the world.

the need for a new *awareness* in a context in which ICTs predominate is more vital than ever today.

If the global communication society has come hand in hand with disproportionate promises and unfulfilled utopias, today it is compulsory to examine and evaluate why this has transpired. It is now imperative to abandon *blind trust* in technology and to deepen our critical spirit. We need to develop an aware attitude that is capable of weighing the positive and negative effects of the changes and especially one that is able to inspire new technical developments that mesh with human beings' aspirations.

To accomplish this, we must first dissolve the *axiom of spontaneous technological progress* and accept the fact that when technological alternatives are chosen, progress is only one option among many. The positive development of media technologies will depend on our ability to take the right decisions and gain cognizance of their potential impact. The global communication society harbours enormous potential, along with some risks. However, its full, positive realisation depends on whether humanity, including each and every one of us, gains in awareness and responsibility.

From our standpoint, today this *awareness* must be *media-related* and *humanistic.* On the one hand, as media-related, its main goal must be to monitor the development of the media and be keenly aware of what it may represent for humanity, for better or for worse. On the other hand, this awareness must drive the values of a new humanism and it must do so in many senses:

a) In the sense that it must situate *the human person at the core of this media civilisation,* this new manmade, telecom world around us, just as in the Renaissance the humanists managed to place human beings at the centre of a world that had previously been organised by theology;

b) In the sense that this new awareness must drive *the primacy of the critical sense towards technology* and thus replace this *trusting* and rather unselective attitude that prevails today and forces us to unconditionally accept technological innovation. This echoes how the humanists defended a free, critical interpretation of the classical texts and ultimately the autonomy of the intellect and the human person. While Renaissance humanism served as a critical filter for the values of its day by filtering mediaeval culture with classical culture, the new 21st century humanism must foster a critical sense that is alert to the hypertechnologised environment and capable of discerning between what should be retained and what should be revamped;

c) In the sense that, while Renaissance humanism helped to "discover" the sense of self and biography[21] and fostered a new form of individual autonomy in comparison with the sometimes asphyxiating weight of traditionalist thinking,[22] the *new humanism must help to foster a sense of autonomy in a context in which global communication* can engender dependence and very subtle forms of intellectual subjugation;

d) In the sense that, while Renaissance humanism was characterised by a "discovery" of new "worlds", America first and foremost, but also Africa and Asia, giving rise to an "encounter" — often violent — between cultures and civilisations, the *new humanism in the global communication society must prioritise a new sense of respect*

[21] The Renaissance-era surge in subjectivity, which was also experienced in China, Japan and the Arab world, is what drove portraiture, biography and diverse "subjectivising" genres of literature in ca. 1500. All of this gave rise to what Burckhardt called the *development of individuality* (1982) and Burke prefers to regard as a *change in the style of self-presentation and expression of subjectivity* (2010, pp. 289–290).

[22] Or of community, family, corporation, etc.

for multiplicity and cultural diversity and must support media development with the goal of consolidating the new culture of peace;

e) Finally, in the sense that, just as Renaissance humanism, through the new media and humanistic awareness, now is the time for us to be capable of *reviving the classical idea of the cosmopolitan, universal citizen, with very clear rights and responsibilities,* that entail a planet-wide commitment. We must foster a kind of citizenship that stimulates the idea that individuals view themselves as the bearers of universal rights as well as responsibilities that are also universal.

Today, *media awareness* and the *new humanism* are inseparable. They are the obligatory response to the formation of a *technological civilisation* and a media culture.

An evolving humanism in the context of a global, diverse world

When we talk about the new humanism, we are not referring to an *imitative revival* of Renaissance humanism. Nor are we talking about a kind of humanism that is only good for claiming the importance and dignity of human beings, although this too is crucial. We are calling for a *global, evolving humanism*, in the words of Julian Huxley, the first Director-General of UNESCO. The goal is not to defend a human ideal and spread or impose it but rather to accept the fact that human beings and their dignity must be developed today by accepting their global scope, in the diversity of the entire planet, and by accepting their variability throughout the history and in the context of the diversity of cultures.

It is a kind of humanism that, in Sitaram's words, would be based on the steadfast conviction that, in order to make our lives and cultures healthy and interesting, "our value system

has to grant as much importance to *individuality* as it does to *responsibility* and as much importance to *uniformity* as it does to *diversity*" (1998, p. 10).

To accomplish this, we need a kind of readjustment. While Western philosophies have traditionally accentuated the construction of the individual and his or her rights, their Eastern counterparts have primarily stressed the individual's responsibility to the community. However, this is not an irresolvable contradiction. As Sitaram claims, the values from both conceptions can be integrated into a balanced system whose utmost expression would be the capacity to know and learn about other cultures at the same time that we show and exhibit our own. In this sense, the teachings of Jaimini, Confucius, Lao Tsu or Shankara can engage in seamless dialogue with those of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle or Kant, and Chanakya could be read along with Stuart Mill. The new communication, its ease and its global nature are what not only foster this approach and this re-balancing but also somehow demand it.

In this sense, humanity must force the media system as a whole to shoulder the obligation to stimulate this intense intercultural relation that the global world demands of us. We must force it to act as an *interpreter* and *translator* — cultural translation — among all of humanity's diverse codes: between our codes and the codes of the *Other*. In other words, the goal is to align the entire media system with the obligation to make a systematic effort at mutual understanding among all the collectives, peoples, societies and communities in this global world.

To do this, we would need to be capable of criticising and dissolving our own prejudices and stereotypes, the ones that stop, harm and betray the encounter with others and their cultures. And with all of this, we must be willing to accept

what the humanists in the modern age called the *vita attiva*, which today we could call *active universal citizenship.*

This would require an enormous cultural and educational effort, a transformation of mindsets that might seem overwhelmingly vast yet is utterly necessary. All of this, then, would require systematic education and deep-seated awareness. For our part, we have agreed to call this education a *media education* and this awareness *media literacy.* Both of these should lead us to the *gain in media awareness* that must be allied with the *new humanism.*

Both media education and media literacy will entail a long, profound and intense process that must be undertaken, in view of the circumstances, with diligence and urgency.

In essence, it is an effort that will lead to the *re-launch of today's communicative universe.* The entire media system will have to ground and support itself on a new — and ancient — aspect of human dignity: freedom of awareness and of communication. That is, it will have to ground and support itself on the individual's full autonomy and capacity to judge freely, to adopt informed decisions based on the fulfilment of the right to information and transparency, to freely express opinions and convey information, to freely create and interact with others, to use all the media available within their reach and to reciprocally demand respect for diversity. One key to this lies in the possibility of media literacy.

Chapter 3

THE EVOLUTION IN LITERACY

Historical perspective

Throughout the history, humanity has gradually acquired languages, intellectual capacities and communicative skills that have enabled it to *understand and take charge of* the world around it and that have provided it with a culture and an identity. Many of these languages and skills depend on the kind of codes used and the systems of signs that they generate. The most widespread of all of them is the one that has been capable of effectively transforming the spoken word into written text using the letters of an alphabet. The process of assimilating and using this written code is called literacy. However, generally speaking, we will use the word literacy to refer to the acquisition of any kind of code that facilitates and fosters communication. Within this context, media literacy would mean the process of assimilating and using the codes involved in the contemporary media system as well as the operative skills needed to properly use the technological systems on which these codes are based.

Media literacy should be understood as the development of a *phylogenesis* today that began thousands of years ago and is still continuing. B. Stiegler offers an interesting perspective on the way in which literacy processes take place. In his view, a literacy process[23] is one part, specifically the intellectual

[23] He talks specifically about the process of *grammatisation*, but we can consider it the equivalent.

part, of a broader process that consists of *retaining* — that is, memorising — information through *technical objects* — that is, memory vectors — or through written forms. In this way, *instrumental technologies* or tools and *intellectual technologies* or repertoires of semiotic codes are combined to create devices that *externalise* the memory — meaning recorded information — of a human group, creating a dimension that he calls *hypomnesic*: "the *hypomnesic* layer is memory as it is conserved on a calendar, on a map, in an account book as *hypomnemata* in Foucault's sense of the word but also, generally speaking, as an instrument of calculation. And it is precisely how the *hypomnesic* turns into a set of supports for calculation, just like the accounting tools of the *ratio* in the origin of pre-capitalism, like files, and in which navigational aide techniques (...) prefigure what will later become communication technologies" (Stiegler, 2008, p. 159).

According to Stiegler, the accumulation of devices and codes with the ability to record and systematise humanity's memory, and to spread it and make it accessible, becomes a fundamental factor in the process of forming individuals. Obviously, language and writing are essential, basic codes in this process of setting up external memories, which humanity has engaged in since its inception.

For our part, we could say that all of these devices and codes and their consequent memories are also decisive in the civilising process, using the term coined by N. Elias, and more generally in everything society and culture construct. So this set of devices has been both the cornerstone and the result of the different processes of literacy that humanity has experienced throughout its history. And the forms in which we organise peaceful coexistence and the distribution of power in a given social formation largely depend on them.

The stages in literacy

Setting aside processes of *memorisation* that do not involve writing but that do constitute a system, albeit a rudimentary one, for accumulating experiences, we shall situate the origin of today's process of literacy in the discovery and development of writing systems (both ideographic and verbal). We shall call the point of origin of this literacy *classical* and we shall therefore talk about classical literacy.

The process of *classical literacy* went through different phases and critical junctures. Until the invention of printing presses with movable type[24] and their development during the Renaissance and in the Modern Age, this process of literacy was reserved for and limited to a chosen few, a religious or political aristocracy that controlled access to the sources of writing and texts. However, with the spread of the printed book, the number of people with access to writing and texts increased and with it the social influence of the process of literacy. It received an important impetus with the Industrial Revolution, the advent of urban society and the proclamation of compulsory education in some states. Literacy began to be seen as a required dimension of the new citizenship.

With the arrival of mass media — generally speaking *electrical media,* that is, film, radio and television — a new reality emerged: the word and image, memorised with the concurrence of electricity, regain and boost their capacity to massively transmit information and knowledge. In this context, writing and text somehow lost part of their social hegemony. However, this is not a simple revival of orality or *visuality.* The new media generate new languages that require new competences that extend beyond what was regarded as the competence of literacy until now. These capacities must be linked to a broader context that requires

[24] The printing press was developed in China in 1048 by Bi Sheng.

new competences, especially the ones related to the codes of the mediatised image and audiovisual language. It is possible to talk about *audiovisual competence.*

However, the changes were not going to stop there, given the IT revolution and the development of digitalisation. That is, with the arrival of computers and multimedia communication, more advanced capacities and competences were needed. We then speak about *digital literacy.*

Where digital technologies fused with analogical technologies in recent decades and both of them, along with their specific languages, were added to and integrated into complex multimedia platforms, we can talk about media convergence. This is where talking about digital literacy begins to become partial and insufficient. We must now talk about *media competence and literacy*.

The table below briefly summarises the stages in this evolution, in particular the relationship between the historical period, the communicative context, new competences and sociocultural consequences.

Classical literacy (reading and writing) aligned with the process of literacy in reading and writing that began in ancient history and reaches down to our day. Primary school plays an essential role here. Until the modern states were set up during the Industrial Revolution, reading and writing were limited to the elites, but the introduction of compulsory education expanded their scope up to the present situation, in which more than 90% of the populations of the more developed countries are literate.

Audiovisual literacy is inherent in electronic media such as film and television. It developed focusing on the hegemony of both still and moving images. Its spread led to some changes in educational policies, but they did not translate into a truly

Historical period	Main media	Competences	Socio-cultural consequences
Classical antiquity and the Middle Ages	Verbal and gestural communication	ORAL COMPETENCE Mastery of the oral and gestural language	Systematisation and conservation of knowledge through the oral tradition
	Development of the written alphabet	LITERACY COMPETENCE Literacy competences (reading and writing)	Society begins to organise itself around documents and written texts
Renaissance — Enlightenment First Industrial Revolution	Development of the printing industry: press, books, etc.	LITERACY COMPETENCE Enlargement and extension of literacy	Advances in the empirical sciences and philology
Second Industrial Revolution	Advent of electronic media: telephone, film, radio and television	AUDIOVISUAL COMPETENCE Audiovisual literacy	Emergence of mass and directed consumer societies
Information Society Third Industrial Revolution	Digital media and Internet	DIGITAL COMPETENCE Digital literacy MEDIA COMPETENCE Media literacy (in the context of media convergence)	Predominance of technology in the organisation of society Globalisation Explosion of knowledge

formal policy. Large swaths of the population are audiovisual literate, but the formalisation and grammaticalisation of this form of literacy is scarce.

Digital literacy is linked to the new digital media and is largely dependent upon the language of IT. Its emergence has necessitated a serious transformation in the literacy competences and the addition of new skills and aptitudes. It is a very recent concept that often tends to be used synonymously with the technical skills required to use the new digital instruments.

Media literacy: This is required by the convergence of media, both analogical and digital and new multimedia platforms. It characterises the advanced stage of development of the

Information Society. However, it is obvious that this new literacy encompasses and includes all of the previous ones. In the realm of this communicative and technological development, there are two major turning points that fostered the need for this new media literacy: a) the appearance of the electronic media (telephone, film, radio and television), which characterise the paradigm of mass communication that was dominant from the 1950s to the 1990s; and b) the arrival of digital media. The latter, which are disseminated with a speed and intensity previously unheard of, have prompted the appearance of a new intellectual, semiotic and communicative context.

A PARADIGM SHIFT

The new concept generated by the Information Society in the late 20th and early 21st centuries entails a paradigm shift, a qualitative leap compared to the hegemony of the *mass communication* systems that prevailed until the end of the 20th century. It entails the predominance of decentralised, global media networks — the Internet — and at the same time the convergence of very different kinds of codes and languages.

However, the new paradigm of the Information Society or network media does not completely nullify the former paradigm in which mass media prevailed. Therefore, it does not signal a replacement of the *mass context* in favour of the new *digital context.* Generally speaking, in all countries and societies, today the mass media, characterised by a *broad range of* audiences and by *centralised production and dissemination,* and the new *digital multimedia* context, characterised by *capillarity and reticulation of the dissemination of information, interactivity* and the *multimediality* of the messages, coexist alongside one another. In terms of the literacy processes, this means that all of the different kinds of literacy discussed

survive and interact: classical literacy linked to reading and writing, audiovisual literacy, digital literacy and media literacy.[25] However, we understand that media literacy, when it does exist, subsumes and includes all the others.[26]

The table below compares the main features of both predominant paradigms: the mass media paradigm and the digital media or multimedia communication paradigm.

Paradigm of mass communication *Electronic media*	**Paradigm of multimedia communication** *Media integration and digitalisation*
Autonomy of each medium	Media convergence
Centralised production and dissemination	Online production and dissemination
Static emission-reception	Mobile emission-reception
Passive (or active) and mass reception	Interactive, fragmented reception
Local or national dissemination	Local and global dissemination
Creation of broad audiences	Creation of active communities
Specific languages for each medium	Hypertextual and multimedia languages

In the paradigm of mass communication, the autonomy of each of the main media is notorious. In multimedia communication, however, the distinctive feature is the convergence, complementariness and overlap of the different media. *Platforms* that integrate several media multiply, such as a computer that can also receive television and radio signals or a telephone that can receive television and Internet. At the same time, we are witnessing a systematic

[25] In fact, the importance of *classical* literacy continues to support and structure many personal and social activities and is an essential part of both mass communication and digital communication systems.

[26] In practice, a media literate person must be literate, to a greater or lesser degree, in the codes of reading and writing, in audiovisual codes and in digital forms. In theory, media literacy is considered the integration of all of the other kinds of literacy cited in the context established by the new media and communication codes.

push toward the *transversality of the contents*, which can be channelled through a multiplicity of different networks and platforms. In this sense, the number of productions that are fated to circulate transversally in different media and languages from their earliest conception to their distribution rises considerably. All of this is coupled with the fact that in the shift from one paradigm to another, media omnipresence has risen dramatically. The communicative technologies of the mass paradigm require messages to be both received and emitted from static, fixed points. With the arrival of the multimedia communication paradigm, the mobility of both the receivers and the emitters is a fact: they have set up complex networks in which the satellites of dissemination, terrestrial emitters and both wired and wireless networks, combine to ensure users-emitters total mobility over vast swaths of the planet.

Regarding the circulation of messages, the mass paradigm establishes circuits that put a premium on centralised dissemination and one-way circulation. However, in the multimedia communication paradigm, messages circulate through complex networks and their mass reception depends on the capacity of countless nodes within these networks to filter or re-disseminate them.

This also affects the way the messages are disseminated. While in the mass media paradigm the dissemination circuits generally only allow for local or national communication, in the multimedia communication paradigm the messages can be simultaneously disseminated on both a local and global scale. The barriers that technology used to pose barely exist anymore, although economic and cultural differences now act as barriers.

There are many recipients of communication within the mass media paradigm and they generally act passively; their only activity involves interpreting the message, both

individually and as mediated by the existence of secondary communication circuits called the second echelon of communication. By contrast, the audiences that interact in the multimedia paradigm tend to be receivers with the capacity to respond to the messages or at least with a far-reaching ability to react to them and to autonomously create and produce their own messages.[27]

The transformation of communication users

As a result of all of this, there has been a major mutation in the individuals who participate in the media universe. Some recent studies conducted in different countries show that the changes have been profound, particularly among children and youth. Almost universally, given access to the media, they combine the use of old and new media and do so with an attitude of participation and active communication that is replacing the former passive — or at most interpretative — attitude specific to the mass media universe. The term *appropriation*[28] of the new media by youth has been used to designate this new style of behaviour and the definition of "multimedia children and youth" has been coined (D'Amato, 2006).

In reality, however, this characteristic is starting to become a feature of all individuals who participate in the contemporary media universe regardless of their age.

Individuals living in the Information Society have a kind of personal bubble in which *old and new* media are combined. With them, they organise their *media time,* which is continually on the rise, and they perform their leisure activities, work and social interaction during that

[27] In any event, it should be borne in mind that the old and new paradigm coexist.

[28] Mediappro (2006).

time. They move freely from one medium to another. They combine them according to their possibilities and, generally speaking, use them as a *window* through which they interact with the world. They are more and more likely to live in a *virtual world* made of simulations and specific to each person, which might lead them towards a kind of being alone together (Turkle, 2009) or toward highly active intercommunication networks. These users are increasingly fragmenting their time into small media sequences and they increasingly *multitask* with the media. They also tend to be nomadic communicators: that is, they carry their personal bubble with them and communicate from any place at any time. In short, they lose part of their real life, or live experiences, their up-close-and-personal life in favour of a tele-connected, virtual and often broadcasted life.

We shall call this kind of user *active multimedia users* not only to underscore their multiple access to the media but also to stress the idea that they act in various dimensions — communicative networks and live activities — in relation to increasingly extensive and more varied collectives and using a vast variety of semiotics and languages. They are constant *weavers of networks* and *hybridisers of contexts*, situations, activities and spaces. And through their extensive media relations, they take on new roles and identities, fulfil new functions and accommodate their personal psychology to the new media circumstances.

For all of these reasons, we are not only witnessing the emergence of new competences and skills, but also increasingly and more clearly noticing the need to acquire them. It goes without saying that these new skills correspond to a kind of competence that obviously goes beyond that of the classical literacy processes until now. It is what we have called *media literacy* and an international movement has been instigated around it, which we shall discover in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

THE MEDIA LITERACY MOVEMENT

A SURGING MOVEMENT

What are the characteristics of this movement? Is it the existence of actors that share objectives and goals? The existence of common strategies and realms of convergence among all the strategies? Shared styles and methods? Meeting points and common practices? Formal and informal institutions? Dissemination and educational activities? If all of these conditions are needed for a movement to exist, then there is no doubt that today we can talk about an organised movement in media education and media literacy around the world.

On every continent and in many countries, to a greater or lesser extent, we can find groups and individuals working in the field of media education, including associations, collectives and formal institutions working in the field. They are gaining visibility and interacting with each other. Many of these groups share goals and strategies, or at least debate them and subject them to analysis. They share diverse styles of action: some work at schools through curriculum programmes or activities while others work through para-school, social or civil systems. Their proposals and forms even share a certain family resemblance despite their geographic and cultural differences. It is clear that they make use of common spaces, such as university encounters, scientific conventions, institutions, conferences, workshops, magazines, publications and websites. There have also been

standing centres and institutions working in the field for some time now as well as entities and organisations that operate in the media literacy sphere. And of course we can find training, instruction and knowledge dissemination activities that are regularly and sometimes systematically concerned with media literacy.

This development of media literacy is a new phenomenon that has had two major catalysts in recent years. The first is *innovation in the academic curriculum,* which has brought in digital and media competences as essential goals in almost every country of the world. This has provided a huge impetus to school programmes, the preparation of teaching materials and especially teacher training on this issue since the 1990s. The second is *the development of a strategy to promote the Information Society*, which has made great strides in advancing toward formalising public policies on media literacy. For example, media literacy has been enshrined in Europe through laws[29] as one of the ends that the audiovisual media system must pursue.

For all of these reasons, it would be hard to doubt that media literacy has become a truly international movement today.

The predominant orientations in the media literacy movement

If we survey the different trends in the media literacy movement, we can discern the existence of several predominant orientations. We shall discuss the three most important ones: a) the *protectionist* orientation, b) the *promoting* orientation

[29] European laws are called directives and they require modification, whenever necessary, of the laws in each of the European Union member states. The Directive on Audiovisual Media Services was precisely what set forth states' obligations to diagnose and promote the media literacy of their citizens.

and c) the *participatory* orientation. Each of them has specific objectives and a distinctive style.

The *protectionist* orientation upholds the goal of protecting *vulnerable parties* against potential threats of the media system. It is grounded on a serious concern about the risks of the rising media power and thus adopts preventative and defensive actions. It upholds the implementation of policies regulating the media and surveillance systems to monitor its actions and their consequences. In this sense, protectionist policies are quite frequently associated with children and youth, who are the most vulnerable to the potentially harmful effects of the media due to their age and education.[30] Yet these policies can also be found regarding sexual content, xenophobic and racist content and policies concerning the need of sustain cultural diversity.

This protectionist attitude can generally be found in initiatives promoted by educational and political institutions. Their usual style consists of stressing the need to protect citizens' rights and, with this end in mind, they promote legislative or institutional initiatives, although they are also associated with research and education.

The second is the *promoting* orientation. This consists of spearheading or encouraging activities that tend to stimulate greater awareness of the media universe and citizen empowerment.

This orientation is based on the conviction that the new media offer all citizens opportunities and potentialities that should not be squandered. Therefore, it seeks to launch actions that

[30] This protectionist attitude is found in the Convention on the Rights of the Child promulgated by the United Nations, which explicitly states children's right to be protected from anything — either physical or intellectual — that may harm their personal development.

positively help to develop these potentialities. Their attitude is less defensive than the protectionist orientation and stresses the constructive facet of the relationship with the media through either intellectual creativity or communication relations. This attitude can be found in both schools and informal education, and it is also quite entrenched in the local media system through local newspapers and radio stations, for example.

Finally, the *participatory* orientation stresses the spread of social production and communication for the development of knowledge, interactivity and dialogue. It regards the sphere of communication and its products as the legacy of all of humanity and therefore as open and free. This attitude is associated with a political philosophy that trusts in individuals' autonomy, critical capacity and ability to properly guide their own personal development and thus contribute to the collective welfare. It has been fully developed through the spread of the Internet and the web (Berners-Lee and Fischetti, 2000), which is unquestionably the medium that does the most to facilitate the sharing of resources and social interactivity. It is beginning to be viewed as an important part of deliberative democracy (Dahl, 1993) and the concept of *active citizenship*.

The integration of all three perspectives

These orientations might at times seem mutually incompatible and they can certainly be mutually ignored. Somehow this is not surprising given that each of them reflects a different style. Thus, the protectionist positions fall closer to positions of *guardianship* and at times have *limiting* styles and they also tend to be rooted in a somewhat sceptical attitude towards the potentiality of the media. In turn, the promoting vein tends to be associated with trusting and optimistic — more

integrated — attitudes and with an activist and adventurous spirit with a clearly *projective* component. Likewise, the participatory orientation fits with antiauthoritarian, more dialectical styles that embrace conflict and debate with a certain philosophy of trust in the value of the public sphere and citizens' capacity to react.

However, none of these orientations in the media literacy movement are incompatible and can be integrated systematically. Despite the existing differences in style, all three coexist and are complementary in many action programmes. When this takes place, the participatory orientation tends to be the one that acts most effectively as a container of the other two because cases of both protection and regulation or both promotion and encouragement can arise within a broader context of widespread participation. When protection prevails, however, it is difficult for it to encompass promotion and vice versa; nor is promotion capable of accommodating the broader sense of what participation means.

The participatory orientation's capacity to accommodate the other two is probably what contributes to its spread and dissemination. For this reason, it seems to be emerging as the future orientation of media literacy. This fits in with the most advanced theories regarding the public sphere and the role that the media should play in it and at the same time it corresponds to the relevancy of the idea of the active citizen required by today's democratic institutions. This participatory orientation seems to characterise the new media literacy movements linked to the social and collective production of knowledge such as wikis[31],

[31] That is, methodologies that permit cooperation and collective work. They are based on the philosophy of co-participation in resources and open content.

copyleft[32] and blogs; to the calls for electronic democracy; and more generally to a philosophy centred on the principle of co-participation in resources. Its principles are in turn critical and liberal, tolerant and respectful of diversity, democratising and defending of equality.

The new values of media literacy

Thus, in recent years new values that are inspiring the media literacy movement have been emerging. What are these values? On what principles are they based?

The most prominent value is the *defence of individual autonomy* based on critical thinking, free examination and the right to information. It is further based on equal access and the egalitarian distribution of competences and capacities. This contains an echo of the principles on which the Renaissance and European humanism were based in the 15th and 16th centuries as well as the sense of freedom, autonomy and individual criticism that were proclaimed by the thinkers of the Enlightenment.

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[32] The English expression "copyleft," a play on the word "copyright," identifies an alternative model of managing copyrights based on a system of licenses through which the authors (as the original holder of the rights to their work) indicate to users of the work that it may be freely used, disseminated and often even modified, as long as certain essential conditions are respected. In the initial version of copyleft (that is, the one referring to the realm of IT), the main condition required users of the work to make possible modifications to the work under the same legal system (and generally under the same license). In this way, the copyleft system and the entire set of liberties derived from it are always guaranteed. In a not strictly technical-legal sense, the expression "copyleft" can also refer more generally to the cultural movement that has developed around the wave of this new praxis compared to the rigidity of the traditional model of copyright.

Second, they stress *the constructive value of open, participatory dialogue*. They believe in the capacity of the masses and organised collectives to generate quality information, to critically evaluate this information and to drive decision-making. Thus, they defend the idea that the knowledge generated by ICTs and the new media should be shared by humanity and benefit everyone. They believe that the private, exclusive ownership of science or knowledge is unacceptable beyond the fair limits that must be placed on intellectual property and fair compensation. Therefore, they defend public ownership of knowledge and the firmly rooted idea that communication is a cause common to all of humankind. If we wish to pinpoint historical forerunners of this attitude, we can mention the democratic and deliberative bent of the Greek city-states; dialogue as a form of reasoning as driven by the earliest philosophers, which continued actively during the Middle Ages and Modern Age through rhetoric; what the Enlightenment called the *Republic of Letters*; and the founding principles of modern democracies, as well as the communitarian and egalitarian bent of Eastern philosophies and thinking styles.

Third, they focus on *personal and collective creativity and the imagination* as elements that are consubstantial with the sphere of healthy communication. Hence, they defend the idea of fostering creativity as a basic resource for solving problems and innovating and attaining social and economic improvements in both young people and adults through educational policies and practical opportunities. The forerunners of this attitude can be found in the ideas and aspirations behind the artistic Renaissance of the 15th century; in the development of artistic, literary and intellectual movements that revolutionised aesthetic and artistic trends in the early 20th century and in the creativity

driven by the development of intellectual technologies related to the new communication networks.

Fourth, they uphold the ideal of an *active, communicative democracy* that should foster political democracy. Without a democratisation of the possibilities for expressing oneself and finding information, without real equality in the possibilities for participating and sharing opinions, a democratic exercise of power cannot exist. And it must come hand in hand with a vigilant, alert, diligent attitude on the part of citizens that facilitates their participation and informed decision-making in all political processes.

Last but not least, the new media literacy movements stress the value of *understanding and respect for cultural diversity and dialogue among cultures.* The new media literacy respects the autonomy and uniqueness of each culture, but it builds bridges in order to construct a universal dialogue among them that fosters the spirit of understanding and the gradual, painstaking construction of shared values. In this way, the media literacy movement is against stereotypes and prejudices and in favour of the potential of the media and ICTs to build a universal culture of peace.

The spheres and actors

In which physical and institutional spaces does the media literacy movement operate? Who are the actors participating in these processes? We shall try to briefly describe them below. Our goal is to have a kind of rational cartography to describe and systematically organise the vast variety of circumstances in which media literacy is taking place today. The table below offers an overview of these elements.

Contexts	Actors	Competences	Processes
Personal	Adults	Individual and personal competences in the consumption and appropriation of the media and ICTs	Conditions of access and use Individual development of skill acquisition
	Children and young people		
Family	Parents and guardians	Competences to authorise the use of the media and ICTs and for media education	Household conditions of access and use Family media education actions Activity in family media production
	Children and young people	Competences for collective learning through the media and ICTs	
Formal education	Legislators and authorities	Competences to regulate and impose sanctions in the realm of communication and media literacy	Conditions of access and use of ICTs Curricula and programmes Media education activities Media production activities
	Teachers and educators	Institutional and collective competences of teachers in the realm of guardianship and media education	
	Parents and guardians	Personal competences of parents; and personal and professional competences of teachers and guardians	
	Students	Competences of collective learning and education	
Media	Legislators and authorities	Competences in media education policy and in media policy	Conditions of media regulation and participation Dissemination and promotion activities Public competences and participation
	Companies	Competences in promoting media education	
	Professionals	Competences in media education policies	
	Public (audience)	Collective competences in media literacy	
Citizens	Associations	Competences in the development, instrumentation and evaluation of media education projects and the capacity for synergy	Conditions of citizen regulation and participation Design and promotion of media education activities Individual competences and participation
	Individual citizens	Civic competences	

Strategic media education table

As mentioned above, the table on the previous page shows the corresponding keys to the media literacy movement that are crucial for understanding the potential scope and extent of the media system.

First, it shows the *contexts*, which must be viewed as the entire set of situations grouped under a specific *framework* that results from formal or informal institutionalisation, depending on the case, and that predisposes the actors through the establishment of *conventions* and *norms* of action.

These contexts range from open and lax ones, such as the *personal* and *family* contexts, to more *formalised* ones such as *education*, and finally to the *media* context which, in contrast, is characterised by randomness and spontaneity. In any case, each is a specific realm, a kind of *playing field* where individuals engage to perform specific activities that involve media competences.

In each context, individuals or institutions interact while (relatively) respecting the conventions of each framework; we shall call them the *actors.* In each of these contexts, the actors accept roles, participate in exchanges and follow rules of expressiveness and identity. In this sense, we must understand that a context proposes a kind of *pattern* into which individuals fit with greater or lesser leeway. Knowing and heeding these *patterns* is also a part of *communicative competence.*

In each context in which actors participate, we can also distinguish between *specific competences* regarding media literacy. Some of these competences can be directly, or we should say *transitively,* assigned to the subject in question. Others are indirect or intransitive; that is, they

are competences that affect the others' competences. For example, being able to recognise the denotation of an icon is a transitive competence, while guiding the interpretation of an icon is an intransitive competence. The competences of guiding, tutoring and helping are also indirect.

When we talk about *processes,* we are referring to the activities and activity flows that occur among actors, with their specific competences, within a specific context. Some of these processes are basic and simple in nature, such as the household conditions for accessing and using the media, although they are always dynamic. Others, however, are rule-based, planned and even explicit activities. Obviously, both of them are related to and interact with each other.

The media literacy movement operates in these contexts, involves some of the subjects and actors shown in the table and establishes specific processes. They all affect the development of specific strategies.

Keys to the contexts

What role do the contexts play in media literacy strategy?

The *personal context* is informal, the sphere of individual everyday experience with the media. This is where individuals acquire knowledge and attitudes personally and autonomously or perhaps where they develop the knowledge and attitudes they acquired elsewhere. It is also where preferences, tastes and motivations are developed, and where one's personal media sphere is developed.

The *family or domestic context* in its broadest sense (Silverstone and Hirsch, 1996) is usually the main framework in which media experiences and events are shared, where the first rules — either implicit or explicit — are delineated

during childhood. Parents — or guardians — try to model their children's media consumption. For example, they set up conditions for using media; they talk about and discuss content, preferences and interpretations; they take decisions regarding purchases; they assign different spaces where media may be used inside the home, such as the living room, bedroom or study; they criticise the propositions and suggest mechanisms; they discuss styles and tastes; and they stress trends. Siblings discuss, or more often argue about, the selection of programmes and the use of the console or the computer. The family is thus an early realm in which the first media literacy strategies can be designed and their influence tends to be decisive in the long term.

The *formal educational context* is the space where learning and teaching are systematically institutionalised and processed. It is the space of curricular media education. In it, educators schedule their activities using media and about media. Here, the skills, competences, objectives and purposes to be attained are outlined. This is the realm in which media education is delivered and where participants work actively with the ICTs and media available to the school.

The *media context* means a realm, usually within the public sphere and with little influence on other contexts, be they personal, family or educational, made up of the media, the public, professionals and institutions or companies. There is no doubt that the messages and media flows implicitly contain indications and suggestions as to the use and activity that the public receives with greater or lesser awareness. In this sense, there is always a teaching/learning dialectic between the media and the user. These processes range from such simple issues as temporary programming to more complex ones like the understanding and comprehension of textual structures and genre, among others. All of these processes may pose an

opportunity for the development of media literacy and entail both explicit and implicit activities.[33]

Finally, by *civil context* we mean the context linked to *citizenship,* the *public sphere* and the *political sphere.* The purpose of media literacy in this realm has been adeptly summarised by Johanna Martinson:

> *The new technologies promote the participation of the plurality and diversity of opinions, but they also contribute to posing us with major new challenges, such as the circulation of unfiltered information, disinformation, copyright issues and manipulation, as well as poor habits in media use. In consequence, we must urgently promote media literacy among citizens so that they can be critical consumers of information capable of effectively contributing to the public discourse. By developing media habits, citizens can protect themselves and others from harmful contents (Martinsson, 2009).*

We should draw attention to the fact that none of the aforementioned contexts operates autonomously; rather, they tend to interact with each other. The personal context interacts with both the family and the educational. The media context affects all of the others while the civil context takes all of the others into account. However, distinguishing contexts from each other and examining them separately has served to promote new strategies within the international media literacy movement.

[33] One implicit activity would consist of not dubbing contributions in a foreign language on the television but rather limiting ourselves to subtitling them in the native language. In this way, by listening to the foreign languages we would be stimulating the learning or at least recognition of foreign languages. One example of an explicit activity is some media spaces devoted to presenting grievances to the readers' or TV viewers' ombudsman.

A CHANGE IN STRATEGY

Until a few years ago, it was understood that promoting critical media capacities was the exclusive domain of educational systems through media education. However, the recent sea change in strategy within the media literacy movement has been characterised by two ideas: a) the need to act in all possible contexts and to do so simultaneously and b) the need to involve all of the actors that are related to the media sphere.

And specifically, the most significant development in recent years within the media literacy movement has been that many actors who were previously removed from media literacy have started to become actively involved in it. This is triggering a series of changes that is affecting all levels. We shall summarise them below in ten points:

1. The gradual inclusion of media education programmes and media literacy goals into the educational curriculum.
2. The encouragement of informal educational activities linked to media literacy at both schools and cultural and youth centres.
3. Greater attention from families to their children's media education.
4. A growing concern on the part of political leaders and legislators regarding issues that affect the protection of minors and risk prevention in media use.
5. The increasing involvement of non-governmental organisations and associations linked to children in problems related to media education,
6. The increasing involvement of the media industry in media education.
7. A link between employment training and lifelong learning programmes and training modules linked to digital and media literacy.

8. An encouragement of formal accreditation of media competences that would be applicable across the board to all citizens.
9. A rising political consensus around the idea that the sustainability of the public sphere requires media literacy to extend to all citizens.
10. A surge in the idea that in a globalised world, the success of intercultural communication and education in peace depends largely on media education and media literacy.

New trends

Based on these ten points, it is easy to pick out the major trends in the media literacy movement in recent years. They are:

A) The creation of an operative conceptual framework for media literacy: In recent years, numerous international institutions, experts and research groups have tried to organise a general working framework that could serve as the conceptual underpinning for coordinating activities by the different actors in the field.

B) New educational curriculum: The educational curricula in many countries are increasingly taking media education into account and are including it as one of the key target competences in recent educational reforms. This means that specific media education programmes are being developed, educational strategies are changing, new systems to evaluate these competences are being put into place and teacher training is being stressed. Likewise, strategies are emerging aimed at making media literacy a part of lifelong learning as well as the necessary globalisation of education.

C) Linking the democratic public sphere and intercultural communication with the development and spread of

media literacy: Media literacy is clearly beginning to be regarded as a key element in the new cosmopolitan citizenship that is part and parcel of a global society. Therefore, it is beginning to be viewed as a right and responsibility of all citizens. For this reason, media literacy is starting to be seen as an essential part of new policies related to governance. Along the same lines, it is believed that promoting a fluid, healthy public sphere in which cultural communication should play an essential role in the new culture of peace largely depends on media literacy.

Chapter 5

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF MEDIA LITERACY

The need for a shared conceptual framework

No matter how dispersed and diverse it has been, the international media literacy movement has always shared the idea, formulated more or less explicitly, that it is necessary to reach a new *media awareness*. This *media awareness* would help us to achieve two key goals: a) *ascertaining the importance and influence of the media system* in our everyday life and b) *developing the competences needed* to use the communication technologies bearing human goals and values in mind.

In this way, *media awareness* would serve to foster *access to technologies* and the *appropriation* of the instruments, codes and languages that enable information to be received, created and disseminated and that empower people to actively participate in society. In essence, it would be one way in which competences, freedoms and responsibilities would be balanced to respond to the demands of the new communication scenario. It is also acknowledged that this media awareness should be *critical*. This is both because it should provide systems for evaluating and selecting information, and because, from a broader standpoint, it should be critical of technological development. However, it must also be *purposeful and active,* meaning that it should give rise to two kinds of criticism: criticism of media messages and criticism of their technological context. Thus, media awareness must in turn foster citizens' free expression

with the goal of strengthening social communication and their right to take decisions autonomously.

Finally, this media awareness should foster exchange and mutual understanding among cultures and it should stimulate the attainment of universal rights and the acceptance of universal responsibilities.

So how do we arrive at this *media awareness*? The answer is by *promoting media literacy.*

Countless experts, researchers, governments and international institutions believe that only the spread of new media competences and a high enough degree of the new skills required among the population — that is, until they achieve a proper level of media education — is going to move humanity forward in its path toward achieving the media awareness that it needs.

However, problems arise when we consider the dispersion and diversity of perspectives within which the media literacy movement has unfolded up to this point. The objectives, styles and forms of action have been so diverse that their effectiveness has often suffered and the coordination of the diverse actors has been quite sub-par.

Therefore, it seems clear that in order to move toward the new media awareness, the first thing needed is to develop a certain consensus, as broad as possible, around the basic concepts that define and organise media awareness and media education.

Therefore the goal, to the extent possible, is to develop a *shared conceptual framework* that is capable of integrating all of the different perspectives into a single horizon.

In this chapter, we will describe the various efforts underway to achieve this goal and their results.

We shall see how it is understood that *media education* is an activity aimed at fostering the acquisition of *elementary competences* regarding the media and ICTs, that is, how it is oriented at attaining what is called *media literacy.* And we shall try to see how this literacy represents precisely a way station in the development of broader and more general *media competences.*

We shall consider how different international institutions, especially UNESCO, have managed to set up a minimal conceptual framework for understanding the phenomena related to media literacy.

It will become clear in this chapter how the different aspects of media literacy are related to other fields, such as:

a) *critical thinking* and an improvement of the capacities of selection and information processing;
b) the *problem-solving capacity*;
c) improvements in expressive, communicative and interactive capacities;
d) *civic participation* and active citizenship.

Throughout this chapter, we will note that media literacy is one of the major objectives of educational and communication policies today and at the same time we will see that attaining this media literacy is currently a crucial condition for the development of free, democratic societies.

International development of the concept of media education

The first concept to historically appear within the field of media literacy is that of *media education,* which should be understood as the didactic and pedagogical effort to develop certain media-related knowledge and skills.

Media education was initially promoted by teachers, researchers and national and international institutions, and it was aimed at responding to the sudden and rising influence of the mass media in society and in the education of children and youth. Even though it first emerged with a vast diversity of approaches and widely differing perspectives, a certain consensus was achieved in the late 1990s that served as the cornerstone for the explosion of the sector in the early years of the 21st century. This consensus was the outcome of a gradual sedimentation of ideas, concepts and perspectives that eventually developed through the publication of certain seminal works along with conferences and seminars, studies, conferences and shared practices.

Here we will survey the milestones in this consensual sedimentation, striving to highlight the most valuable aspects. However, in order to avoid being exhaustive, we will centre on the efforts of international institutions that somehow express the feelings of multiple individuals and groups. We shall do this by specifically examining UNESCO's efforts, given its universal scope, and the European Commission, which in the past decade has shown itself to be particularly active in this sphere. However, we will not exclude other initiatives that deserve mention.

UNESCO's efforts

Media education has been defined and promoted by UNESCO through a study that was performed in four successive stages,[34] ranging from 1982 to 2002, whose milestones are the following: the *Grünwald Conference* (1982), the *Toulouse Conference* (1990), the *Vienna Conference* (1999) and the

[34] To be precise, we should recall that UNESCO's studies discuss media education rather than media literacy. We will see below how media education is an educational strategy that leads to media literacy.

Seville Seminar (2002). During this period and through these events, the foundations of a specific approach to media education were laid and consolidated. Thus, the different documents and declarations issued from these meetings actually comprise a stable, valuable reference for the various actors involved in media literacy around the world.

First of all, we will survey UNESCO's efforts, stressing its chief contributions and conclusions, particularly those that are valid in a global setting. We will then examine the efforts of the European Commission which, following the major outlines of UNESCO, involved the development of a specific communication and education policy whose ultimate goal is media literacy. We shall specifically see how an essentially educational programme that UNESCO had initially spearheaded became a policy issue in the European Union that regards media literacy as an essential variable that affects the community's economic, social and political progress and that is clearly inseparable from the development of the Information Society.

Further on, it will be easy for us to point out the worldwide extent and relevance of policies promoting media literacy in other contexts outside of Europe, including Latin America, North America, Asia, Africa and Oceania. Somehow, all latitudes and cultures today seem to be receptive and favourable to the development of this kind of communicative competence that we call media literacy.

Grünwald: A call to attention

In 1982, experts from numerous countries were invited by UNESCO to gather in the city of Grünwald to debate *media education*. This meeting resulted in a declaration aimed at promoting media education in school systems. The goal was

to attract worldwide attention to the impact of media on citizen training and education. The declaration stated:

> *We live in a world in which the media are omnipresent: a rising number of people spend considerable amounts of time watching television, reading newspapers and magazines, and listening to records and the radio. In some countries, for example, children spend more time in front of the television than at school. In consequence, the role of communication and the media in the process of development should not be underestimated, nor should the function of the media as instruments of active citizen participation in society (...) As a result, we encourage the competent authorities to: a) launch and sustain* ***comprehensive study programmes on media education,*** *from primary school to the university [...] whose purpose is to develop the* ***knowledge, competences and attitudes*** *that foster the critical awareness [...]; b) establish* ***training courses for teachers*** *and intermediaries with the purpose of boosting their knowledge and understanding of the media [...]; c)* ***promote research and activities*** *from which media education benefits in sectors like psychology, sociology and communication; d) sustain and reinforce the* ***actions undertaken or called for by UNESCO*** *whose goal is to encourage international cooperation in media education.*

As is evident, Grünwald Declaration stressed the impact that the mass media were having at the time, in the early 1980s, including the press, radio, television and music. Proof of this is its reference to the importance they were gaining by occupying much of a citizen's day. What particularly stands out is its spotlight on the effects that the media were having on children and their development, and how all of that posed a new challenge to schools.

Thereafter, the experts laid out a preliminary action strategy that consisted of the following points:

- They stressed the need to establish *comprehensive media education programmes* that should span from primary school to university.
- They set the precise goals of these programmes: a) to develop *knowledge about the media* and b) to foster *critical competences and skills.*
- They recognised the need for *teacher training.*
- They demanded *that research into media education be promoted.*

The most significant part of this approach is that in this first approach media education seemed to be regarded as a job to be shouldered almost exclusively by schools and educators. We shall see below how this exclusivity gradually disappeared.

The contribution of the Toulouse Conference

Almost ten years after the gathering in Grünwald, the Toulouse Conference[35] systematised and precisely delimited the new field of media education from the theoretical, practical and geographic standpoints. In this sense, it still serves as a benchmark in the field.

The first conclusion made at Toulouse was that, while promoting media education was considered important in Grünwald in 1982, in 1990 it could no longer be delayed any

[35] In the summer of 1990, 180 delegates from 40 different countries attended an international conference in Toulouse, France, on the future of media education. The title of the conference was quite explicit: *New Directions in Media Education*. It was organised by UNESCO, the British Film Institute and Centre de Liaison de L'Enseignement et des Moyens d'Information.

further. However, it was also noted that the international situation was quite uneven. Countries like Canada, especially the region of Ontario, and Great Britain, along with several European countries such as France, could be regarded as pioneers in the development of media education. By contrast, in such countries as the United States, media education was relegated to an extracurricular activity. In Russia, for example, certain hopes for development were beginning to be glimpsed. And in many other cases, such as in Italy, Spain and several Latin American countries, there were groups working actively on the issue, but there was no systematic development that would achieve a real impact on education. The overall impression was that much remained to be done and that the job ahead was immense.

From the conceptual standpoint, Toulouse retained the strands of action developed in Grünwald; that is, its priority was still on teacher training and the call for curricular programmes in media education to be developed. However, the strategy became more complex and precise than the one set forth in Grünwald. It appealed to the need to have *guidelines for the development of specific curricula* and at the same time it called for *teaching and school materials* for applying those programmes and it proposed a *specific teacher training curriculum*.[36]

In any event, according to the Toulouse Conference, media education was still strictly a school affair. The notion of what families, communities and churches, just to cite a handful of institutions, might do in this realm was barely men-

[36] It even proposed what might have been the first draft of a teacher-training programme in media education. This curriculum would consist of: a) theories and key concepts of media education; b) history of media and its genres and formats; c) basic elements of production, both print and audiovisual; and d) practicum in the development of media education skills.

tioned. Significantly, there is no mention of the role that the media itself might play in meeting the challenge of media education.

The Vienna Conference

The landmark in the third step in UNESCO's process of consolidating media education came with the Vienna Conference in 1999. This conference witnessed the agreement within the media education movement that the communicative framework had changed radically compared to what it had been in the 1980s: it no longer only included the mass media; rather we were also immersed in a new communicative paradigm: the digital universe. Consequently, the concept of *media* implicit in media education shifted radically as well. It was no longer concerned solely with the press, cinema, radio and television; rather, it also began to recognise that media education had to do "with all media and includes words, signs, sounds and still and moving images used as a vehicle by all kinds of technology". This entailed a huge leap forward.

On the other hand, the conference also set the overarching objectives of media education at the threshold of the 21st century, namely:

1. To empower people to *fully understand media communication* and how media operate.
2. *To acquire the competences* needed to use media and communicate with others.
3. *To learn how to analyse and critically reflect* and to *produce* media texts.
4. *To identify the sources* of media texts and understand the political, social, commercial or cultural interests behind the media themselves and the contexts in which they act.

In this sense, the idea was postulated that "media education is part of the basic education of any citizen, in every country in the world, and it is related to freedom of expression and the right to information; for this reason, it is becoming an instrument for both building and sustaining democracy". On the other hand, it recognised that "in countries where the new technologies are still being introduced, media education can contribute to ensuring that citizens recognise the potential of the media to represent their cultures and traditions". In short, media literacy was seen as a means to strengthen and promote democracy and at the same time it is an instrument for developing *cultural diversity.*

In consequence, the new developments put forth by the Vienna Conference include the acceptance of the digital challenge and the use of a more civic and political vantage point on media education. In this latter sense, the participants of the Vienna Conference called for media education to be part of basic education in all countries in the world and that it contribute to developing freedom of expression and the right to information.

With the Vienna Conference's contributions to the concept of media education, the strict school framework started to be blurred and it began to encroach in the broader context of active and participatory citizenship and on the realm of building democracy and cultural diversity.

The Seville Seminar

UNESCO's 2002 Seville Seminar represented the culmination of the pathway travelled by the institutions until then and it is a milestone in the construction of a conceptual framework shared worldwide. In fact, it revived the principles and general definitions adopted between Grünwald and Vienna conferences, but for the first time it issued an explicit

declaration on the need to take specific action through active media education promotion policies in the research sectors and to do this through cooperation among all of the actors involved who, as was explicitly recognised, extend far beyond the framework of the formal educational system.

In Seville, an inclusive definition of media education that distinguished it from the simple educational use of the media and technologies in school settings was formalised: "Media education is related to teaching and learning media (not to teaching other subjects using media)." It also stressed both *critical analysis*, which had been dominant until then, and "the capacity for *creative production*". Finally, it kept the emphasis on the *civic aspects of media education:* "it promotes the sense of community and social responsibility as well as cultural and personal enrichment." From this perspective, Seville entailed a major step forward and a pivotal point in the revision of the concept of media education and especially in the strategies that must be pursued to promote it.

The most significant aspect of this turning point is the expansion of the field of media education and the adoption of a new strategic perspective. The definition of media education proposed in Seville clearly stretches beyond the school setting, yet obviously without abandoning it, and it appeals to the efforts that other actors and social spheres can make, including legislators, authorities, the media industry and NGOs. Indeed tellingly, the conference was held just as the Internet was undergoing vast expansion and at a time when civic associations were surging all over the planet.

What is particularly striking is the stress that the Seville declaration placed on the need to get media involved in the job of media education. This emphasis took shape in two ways: a) the development of *relations with the media industry and cooperation platforms* and b) the proposal to *develop quality standards* applicable to the messages and the

media, which would contribute to making communication professionals more aware of the effects of their work.

The movement is meaningful because until then what prevailed in the media education movement was a kind of mistrust towards the media and their messages, a primarily critical attitude that doubted whether the media were capable of contributing something to the development of the critical awareness of their receivers and critics. In Seville, however, though not lacking a certain controversy, there was a clear stance in favour of demanding the involvement of the media in the job of promoting media education. It appealed to the responsibility of the professionals and companies and upheld the idea that a participatory, democratic and critical communicative sphere fosters the sustainability and stability of the media industry.

Much of this new, more conciliatory tone with the media industry can be attributed to the participation of media professionals and experts from Latin America in the seminar. In these countries, the development of local media and many popular education efforts tend to entail a solid alliance between certain media and educational efforts without detracting from a critical perspective. However, in the English-speaking countries, which until then had exerted a heavy influence over the conceptualisation of media education, a critical attitude prevailed that was not propitious for undertaking joint actions with the media.

Therefore, if we can talk about a "spirit of Seville", it would have to be related to the appeal targeted at many diverse social and institutional sectors to *participate in media education*. Ever since Seville, media education has ceased to be viewed as a realm exclusive to teachers and students; rather, it is considered a job that must involve media professionals, legislators and civic and political institutions.

The European impetus

The pathway undertaken by UNESCO in Seville was a step forward in the acceptance of media education as a key undertaking in both education and media policy. Since the Seville seminar, numerous international institutions have seconded and developed UNESCO's proposals. Here we will particularly focus on the European Commission[37] and UNESCO's efforts in some Arab countries.

Since 1999, the European Commission has been concerned about the consequences of intensive Internet use by children. For this reason, it launched the *Safe Internet* programme, with which it tried to commit institutions and civil society to *prevent and protect* children from the potential risks of the Internet: access to violent or sexual content, loss of privacy, harassment, undesired contacts, addictions, etc.

One of this programme's main proposals regarded media education in the framework of families and non-governmental organisations. With it, the European political authorities began to acknowledge the wisdom of establishing a kind of educational policy on the media system. This acknowledgement was very tentative at first, however. It was specifically in 2000 that the Commission started to seriously take on a programme that we could call media education. Responding to the objective launched at the meeting of the Council in Lisbon in 2000 to develop all of the potentialities of the Information Society within the Union, the Commission launched an action programme that included creating a high-level expert group aimed at designing a strategy to promote what was then called *digital literacy*. At the same time, it commissioned several studies and analyses that could help

[37] The Commission is the executive body of the European Union, which encompasses 27 European countries, most of which share euro as their common currency.

to design effective strategies. It is within this context that a study entitled *Promoting Digital Literacy* (Pérez Tornero, 2005), which recommends a suitable strategy for developing digital competences and clearly stresses a strategic change, is meaningful. The perspective of this study, which was later endorsed by the expert group, is a new avenue of action with the following strands:

- *The acquisition of digital competences cannot be solely approached as the acquisition of technical and operative skills; rather it is a process of cultural change.* When one learns to use a technology, new psychological abilities are developed and new ways of perceiving, thinking and understanding are awakened in individuals. This, in turn, leads to new ways of interacting with others and new ways of creating shared experiences and of establishing collective mindsets. So when digital skills are developed, as is taking place in our societies today, what is happening more than a technical change is a veritable *cultural transformation.* If this aspect of cultural transformation is not perceived and taken into account by the policies aimed at developing the Information Society, we run the risk of rendering the innovations created merely superficial without any impact on improving the system.
- As a result, *to develop the acquisition of digital skills, or when promoting digital literacy, the related policies and projects must take into account the broader framework in which these skills are going to exert an influence and also forecast their transformation.* These are always complex, systemic, institutional and cultural changes that must be addressed as a whole. This is the case, for example, of the inclusion of digital literacy at schools or in the framework of production. If the educational and productive systems do not transform accordingly as people acquire the new skills, that is, if their norms, methods and styles do not change, we run the risk that the new skills acquired by

people are either totally irrelevant for innovation or are an unsustainable, perfectly isolated phenomenon.

At this point, it was recommended that the Commission redefine its strategy to promote digital competences. The goal was not just to develop them as a factor corresponding to personal skills but to understand them within a much broader framework of socio-institutional change.

The immediate consequence of this approach helps to refocus the concept of digital literacy. And it does so in several dimensions.

- While digital literacy had previously been regarded as the skill of using the new digital instruments properly and therefore only took into account the person–machine relationship, this study called for the phenomenon to be considered from a broader and more complex perspective: the person–machine–technological context and the media–institutional–cultural context. Digital instruments were just a part of this context and therefore if only digital competences were developed, the advance was only partial and would be much less sustainable. In order to ensure true empowerment of individuals, they had to develop a new competence aimed at the entire technological context surrounding them, which was dominated not only by the digital media but also by veritable media platforms in which all possible media were combined.
- On the other hand, if the new skills were considered only instrumental, then the vast potential of the transformation — both psychological and cultural — shown by the new media universe, which is decisively influencing the modification of our societies, would not be acknowledged. Therefore, it was necessary to go beyond a merely instrumental view of digital literacy.

- Finally, if the vision of what the acquisition of digital skills meant was restricted, then the innovative potential of the new lessons and new technological media would be squandered. For this reason, it was important that, along with the merely operative approach, an effort should be made to introduce a critical dimension, to gain awareness of the consequences of the technologies and to develop certain technology-related skills.

The conclusion of this study was that, for all of these reasons, the concept of digital literacy was not enough, that it was necessary to have a broader concept, that of *media literacy*, which had to recognise the importance of technology and of the media convergence that was taking place. At the same time, it would add the critical values and awareness of what had been a living legacy of the tradition of media education, which at that point was not yet present in the tradition of digital literacy.

A QUALITATIVE, PARTICIPATORY STRATEGY

However, this need to reformulate policies related to digital literacy did not stem from a single study. Rather, it was a conclusion based on the analysis of policies that the European Union conducted on the issue.

As an early approach to digital literacy, the European Commission had adopted a purely instrumental concept. It was "*the competence required to safely and critically use ICTs at work in free time, in learning and in communication*."

Therefore, the prime objective of the European Commission was to foster the use of computers and the Internet. To do so, it believed that it was enough to have a policy focused on *access* and *technical skills* for citizens, through which they would spontaneously join the Information Society. This led

to an action policy divided into two strands. The first was the *provision of technologies to facilitate access.* The European countries devoted themselves to supplying schools with access to the Internet and computers and to installing public access points in certain areas with structural deficits. Secondly, all of the efforts revolved around *basic Internet instruction.*[38] In the first phase, these skills were considered general for the entire population,[39] although specific curricula adapted to specific groups were gradually defined.

This policy lasted until 2008 because, when the Commission took stock of the situation that year, it noted numerous failures and shortcomings in this policy. The first is that promoting access does not prevent there from being citizen groups that do not manage to integrate the new tools into their lives, sometimes because of a lack of motivation or the failure to see the utility of these tools in their everyday lives. The second is that merely technical learning is not enough and does not seem meaningful for individuals. The European Commission then announced that *quantitative* policies (more computers, more Internet, more technical skills) were not enough. It began to focus more on trying to promote a *change in the cultural climate*; that is, it began to take into account and consider citizen *motivation* and *awareness* because these factors are decisive. It recognised that the essential objective of the promotional policies must be for *people to integrate ICTs into their own lives, finding value and utility in them.* Therefore, it is not enough to promote the acquisition of merely technical skills; rather this must be accompanied by

[38] Focused on teaching computer and Internet usage skills with basic introductions to operating systems and office applications and to some Internet activities (mainly email and web search).

[39] In this sense, digital literacy turned into a key competence to be included in all compulsory education curricula in the various European Union countries.

a *gain in awareness* that enables *citizens to truly appropriate the new instruments.* Thus, policies should accentuate the search for *citizens' involvement and critical participation in ICTs* and, in turn, *an improvement in the qualitative use* of the new tools through good content and services and proper use of them. Therefore, the need for citizens and institutions to gain full awareness of the meaning and consequences of implementing the new digital tools came to the foreground.

Two pathways, the aforementioned study and the practical demands of the European Union, led to a reconsideration of the concept of digital literacy.

From digital competence to media competence

We must also acknowledge that the media context changed during the 1990s with regard to the objectives stated at the UNESCO conference in Grünwald. ICTs could no longer be separated from use of the mass media. ICTs had become mass themselves and the mass media now existed thanks to ICTs. In reality, all media were becoming digitised and the Internet was turning into a *medium of media.*

In this way, the communicative sphere dovetailed with the sphere of the ICTs. The technological networks turned into the new backdrop of communication. So why not integrate the digital literacy current, which was more closely related to computers and the Internet, with the media education current, which had always been concerned with the mass media? Why not bring *digital literacy* into the broader concept of *media literacy* if using computers now actually meant participating actively in the new world of the new media and communication networks?

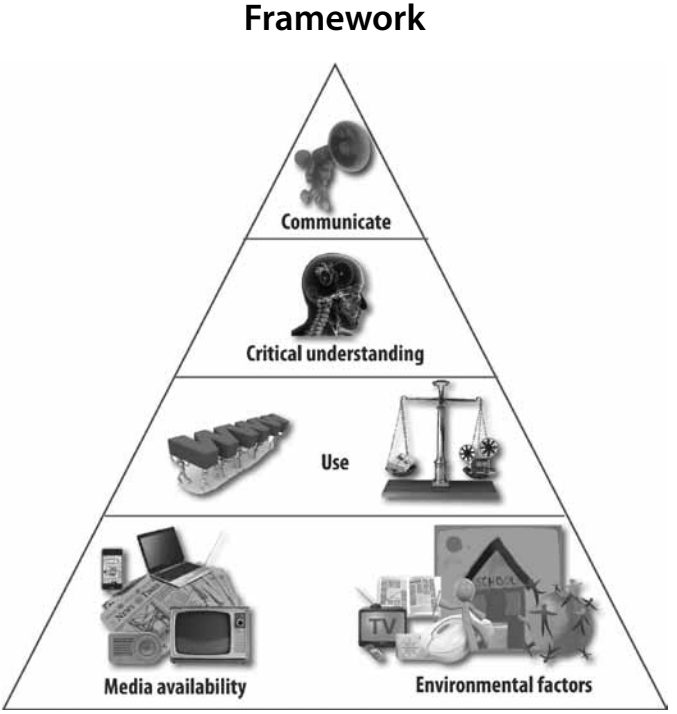
The European Commission systematically and affirmatively answered all of these questions through several studies and

the assistance of a high-level group of experts that began operation in 2007. The first step forward in these efforts was the proposal of a broader, more detailed definition of media literacy:

> *Media literacy can be defined as the capacity to access, analyse and evaluate the power of the images, sounds and messages with which we are faced every day and which play an important role in contemporary culture. It includes the individual capacity to communicate using the media competently. Media literacy concerns all media, including television, film, radio and recorded music, the press, the Internet and any other digital communication technology. The purpose of media literacy is to raise the level of awareness of the different guises taken on by the messages transmitted by the media that we find in our lives every day. This must help citizens to recognise how media filter their perceptions and convictions, mould popular culture and influence personal decisions. It should provide citizens with the capacity for critical analysis as well as creative problem-solving capacities, turning them into aware, productive consumers of information themselves. Media education is part of the fundamental rights of each citizen in every country in the world, just like the freedom of expression and the right to information, and it is crucial to the attainment and consolidation of democracy. Today, media literacy is one of the key prerequisites for the exercise of full, active citizenship, and it is one of the spheres inside which intercultural dialogue should be promoted. Furthermore, media education is a fundamental instrument for raising media users' and consumers' awareness of issues related to copyright (Pérez Tornero, 2004).*

Through this new approach, the concept of media literacy not only expanded the traditional concept of media education but could also give rise to more systematic, complex policies than the ones promoted by media education until then.

Below we will attempt to clarify this complex set of elements that converge in this definition. The first standpoint we will adopt regards media literacy as a set of individual competences.



Media literacy as a system of competences

The capacity to actually use media, to critically understand and be able to evaluate information and finally to create, communicate and participate are all individual competences. Therefore, when trying to clarify the architecture of media literacy, we can attempt to offer a model of the organisation

of these competences in relation to the subject. The figure offers an overview of the problem.

The idea of a pyramid suggests the notion that the different competences are organised from the base to the peak, the lower ones serving as the groundwork for the higher ones. In this sense, we have distinguished between: a) competences related to access and use, b) competences related to critical comprehension (analysis and evaluation) and c) competences in communicative and creative production.[40] Thus, the skills in use are necessary for developing critical skills and both in turn serve as the groundwork for communicative activities.

The organisation into levels

Below we will describe how each of the levels into which media competences are organised operates and indicate the differences among them.

On the *level of the use of media,* we have to distinguish between physical access to media and media content on the one hand, which depends on the *availability* in a given setting, and then the capacity, both cognitive and practical, to properly use these media on the other hand. Thus, we can speak about *use* and *conditions of access.* Environmental factors like the educational system, the policy handed down by the authorities and the role of the media comes into play in both aspects.

[40] The stress on creative production has also been expressed in the public consultation on media literacy organised by the European Commission in 2007: *"The most commonly expressed concern among the respondents was the importance of adding to the definition the ability to create and communicate messages, as this aspect of media literacy is viewed as fundamental in empowering people to become active and informed consumers of media. Moreover, the communicative aspect of media literacy is considered essential for enabling people to make effective use of media in the exercise of their democratic rights and civic responsibilities".*

When we talk about *critical understanding*, we mean the ability to read,[41] understand[42] and evaluate[43] media content and an awareness of the opportunities offered and conditions set by the media. Here we can distinguish between two sub-dimensions: a) *finding and selecting information*: the individual's ability to explore, search for and choose information according to their own interests and b) *evaluation*: the individual's ability to assign value to the information received according to different parameters such as truthfulness, honesty and the issuer's interests. This dimension as a whole, as mentioned above, refers to more sophisticated abilities like critical thinking, personal autonomy and problem-solving capacity.

Communicative competence, which is the highest level in the pyramid, is defined as the set of abilities that enables an individual to create and produce messages using different codes and to disseminate them through different platforms. Therefore, this includes creative, expressive, semiotic and social competences.

This communicative competence has a longstanding theoretical underpinning. At first it was formulated as the speaker's ability to use linguistic skills properly based on the receivers and the context, according to Noam Chomsky (Chomsky, 1965). Jürgen Habermas (Habermas, 1981) reformulated this competence by defining it as a universal, pragmatic competence that enables people to interact with each other based on shared rules.

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[41] By "reading" we mean the ability to decode a message in relation to a specific code and in relation to a precise communication situation.

[42] By "understanding" we mean the ability to relate a meaning resulting from a previous decoding with a specific personal context. Understanding implies signification, which is the ability to introduce the meaning into the entire set of knowledge and interests of the person who decodes the message.

[43] By "evaluation" we mean the process of classifying and categorising the contents of a message in relation to scales of values.

The new media have gone to great lengths to spur not only communicative competence but also *creative production*. They have instilled a paradigm of the interactive network that entails a significant step forward compared to the previous paradigm of mass communication. Media literacy, therefore, is particularly related to this new context and introduces a new framework for the development of both communicative competence and creative production.[44]

The three competences described above foster the development of the person in terms of their awareness, critical thinking[45] and problem-solving ability. These competences affect the acquisition of rules of behaviour, customs and knowledge about the media and its languages in a more or less planned

[44] If we must distinguish communication from creative production, it is because the former seeks mainly pragmatic ends and mutual understanding between interlocutors while the latter seeks personal expression or the creation of aesthetic values above and beyond the communicative function. However, in essence, creative production must be included within the broader sphere of communication.

[45] The concept of evaluation can be enriched — in fact, there was a call for this enrichment by some experts during the European Commission's public consultation on media literacy — with the idea of *critical literacy*: "We would also stress the importance of critical literacy as part of the evaluation component of the definition, for accessing and analysing media messages are not effective if one cannot also critically evaluate those messages, distinguishing the honest from the deceptive, the public interest from commercial persuasion, the objective and trustworthy from the biased or partisan" (Sonia Livingstone, London School of Economics and Andrea Millwood Hargrave, UK Media Literacy Task Force). Even further: "There exist many definitions of media literacy around the world. More and more often they include the ability 1) to access the media, 2) to understand/critically evaluate different aspects of the media and media contents, and 3) to create media contents/participate in the production process. It is not unusual that the definitions also include aspects of learning to use the media in order to participate in the process for social change, for development, towards increased democracy" (Feilitzen, von C. The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media).

way. The multi-contextual process gives rise to the acquisition of specific capacities and competences as well as attitudes and values. This process is called media education.[46]

Finally, communicative competence includes the capacity to interact with other people following certain shared rules. This competence allows citizens to be active and to participate in the public sphere and it must therefore be *distributed* in an equitable fashion.

An overview of the whole

If the pyramidal chart introduced in the paragraphs above describes how the competences are organised in relation to the competent subject, we can also view the phenomenon from a social perspective. In this case, the goal is to see the different realms of activity to which media literacy gives rise. The schema below provides a summarised view of these fundamental fields and enables each of them to be associated with the different realms in the social life in which media literacy plays a part.

We shall see that three main areas arise around the central concept of media literacy:

a) critical and creative skills,

b) media education, and

c) active, participatory citizenship.

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[46] According to John Pungente, media education "is concerned with helping students develop an informed and critical understanding of the nature of the mass media, the techniques used by them and the impact of these techniques. More specifically, it is education that aims to increase students' understanding and enjoyment of how media work, how they produce meaning, how they are organized and how they construct reality. Media literacy also aims to provide students with the ability to create media product" (Pungente, 1989, p. 51.)

In the sections below we will try to describe each of these key areas.

Critical and creative skills

Some of the most complex cognitive tasks performed by human beings depend on media literacy. Below we will see its relationship with some of them, namely *critical thinking, problem-solving abilities* and the capacity to *create, communicate and share information.*

As a whole, *critical thinking* can be seen as a way of using intelligence and information to perform *analyses* and *evaluations* and create *concepts, new ideas, arguments* and *hypotheses, and valid, useful reasoning.* In this sense, critical thinking leads one to develop a) patterns for *understanding the environment* and b) *patterns of action.* Critical thinking provides the subject with specific instruments (both physical and cognitive) that are valid in that they respond to certain accepted criteria, such as concordance with reality, plausibility and precision, and these instruments are useful, provided that they are meaningful and functional. Bearing in mind that much of the informative process we can undertake today — the selection of sources and content, idea associations, analysis, calculations, argumentation, etc. — is done using information and communication technologies, media literacy, which facilitates and powers all of these operations, is essential. Therefore, many of the efforts around media literacy must be aimed at stimulating and developing critical thinking.

Media literacy should offer concepts, rules and competences to help people to properly use the information disseminated by the media. Therefore, media literacy includes the following aspects: knowing how to access and find the best information available using the right sources, the most

diverse and practicable ones; verifying their reliability and value; knowing how to evaluate the information using precise, rigorous criteria; contextualising the information and understanding it according to the source from which it was produced and disseminated, which in turn implies knowledge of the characteristics of the medium, its informative facet, and the ideological and cultural orientation it promotes, if relevant; and finally, integrating it into a set of prior information and knowledge so that it becomes *meaningful*.

Once the capacity for critical thinking has been acquired, the individual is independent and free to think autonomously without the control and guidance of "guardians", the authorities that, according to the definition proffered by Kant, subjugate people's thinking by requiring them to accept veins of reasoning and points of view that are not theirs as their own. While Kant used this expression to refer to the retrograde forces of obscurantism at the dawn of the century of the Enlightenment, today it can be applied to the manipulation and seduction that the mass media sometimes try to impose on their audiences. As a result, the quest for autonomy in reasoning is still as important as it was back in Kant's days.

Problem-solving ability

Karl Popper said that life consists of solving problems. Indeed, one of the jobs that human beings must handle every day involves overcoming the barriers and obstacles interposed between the individual or group and attaining an objective or satisfying a need. Media literacy is closely tied to problem-solving methodology.

Generally speaking, we can posit that problem solving corresponds to the process of seeking the right method to

eliminate the distance between the subject and the object of desire, between the start and end points. In this context, the methodology used to solve problems is the outcome of the synergy between conceptual models, logical instruments, rules, norms and operations capable of enabling the objectives to be attained, on one hand, and the practical resolution of the difficulties and hindrances to attaining the predetermined objectives on the other. In a world dominated by communication, media can play an essential role in all of these operations. It is obvious that media can determine the emergence of aspirations, objectives, purposes and goals for people and that, at the same time, they can provide some means for achieving these goals. Likewise, they can spotlight conflicts, point out contradictions and pose problems while they can also provide some means for resolving them. They can be extraordinarily effective instruments for solving problems, yet they can also create barriers, foster distances, create tensions and exacerbate conflicts. The same can be said of all the technologies that process information: they can help to either solve problems or create them. Media literacy is charged with ensuring that media and their use by individuals can effectively and positively contribute to problem solving.

There are many fields in which problem-solving methods are linked to media practices, such as dealing with intercultural or political conflicts, battling stereotypes and prejudices, integrating information and communication technologies into education and public life, creating communities and networks, engaging in political communication, citizen participation, preserving cultural identity and the privacy and autonomy of individuals, controlling the power of states and other institutions, transparency in the market and consumption, the rights of freedom of expression and access to information, political debates and more.

In all of these realms and in many others, the heightened awareness implicit in media literacy and its immediate consequence, which we have come to call *media awareness,* is decisive for finding positive outcomes to the conflicts and problems in our world.

The capacity to create and communicate

Above, we defined communicative competence and creative production as the entire set of skills that enable an individual to create and produce messages using different codes and to disseminate them through different platforms. This competence includes the following aspects:

a) *Operative skills*: These consist of the entire set of technical skills needed to use the technologies and media. They include motor, perceptive and interpretative skills. Generally speaking, they are associated with simple or at least not highly complex sequences that respond to established routines and do not require high degrees of innovation.

b) *Creative skills*: These are based on the operative skills but introduce a certain degree of originality and innovation through existing discursive symbolic repertoires.

c) *Communicative skills*: These encompass operative skills and sometimes creative skills as well and they facilitate the dissemination of information and messages targeted at a given interlocutor or audience. Communicative competences include the ones that are sometimes called social skills, which are tantamount to the ability to evaluate the relevance of certain messages for certain recipients and the ability to react and accommodate the discursive flow to this interlocutor's responses.

d) *Semiotic and cultural skills*: These refer to the capacity to use and act with the semiotic codes and cultural conventions

that are involved in both the process of creation (creative skills) and the process of communication (which takes place within the framework of a given culture).

The acquisition of media literacy is closely related to the skills outlined above.

Media education

If the critical, creative and communicative capacities are generally individual competences, the question in media education has to do with all of the processes in which capacities related to the technologies and media languages are acquired.

Media education has a wide variety of contexts. For our part, we distinguish between the formal contexts in which an institution or collective programmes conduct an educational or learning activity, and informal ones in which the learning processes take place within activities that are only loosely related to programmed educational intentions. We thus separate activities in media education that can be experienced within the school setting from those that are performed in free-time or social contexts, for example. Within the formal activities, the question of teacher training is extremely important, while in the realm of informal activities, what we could call environmental factors and the creation of the right climates — opportunities and occasions — for the development of media competences come to the fore.

On the other hand, we include the family framework within the realm of media education because this is where children and youth acquire their first media skills. In the family, media education activities can be programmed, but they tend to be

on the level of monitoring, tutoring or even regulating more than programmed instruction.

Finally, in our schema we stressed the role played by the media themselves in creating learning conditions and skill acquisition. This interaction can be spontaneous and at times it can be driven by certain exclusively educational activities by the media.

The issues related to media education will be elaborated upon in more depth in the section devoted to the new media literacy curriculum.

Chapter 6

THE NEW MEDIA LITERACY CURRICULUM: PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES

Explicit and implicit curricula

Education is an endless job — one that knows no rest. Each generation is obligated to transmit to the next its own cultural and technological heritage. And every time this happens, everything has to start from the beginning because children reach the world without any knowledge of life. Thus, a comprehensive new education is required for every generation, a new education for every person and a new education for every epoch. For this reason, because the job of educating never ends and because it is so enormous and yet so necessary and indispensable, human societies have almost spontaneously channelled all of their energy and everyday lives into learning and education since time immemorial. People learn and are educated in many different ways: through imitation, without anyone planning it, and by setting models; in practice, through trial and error and getting it right; in conversations and communication among people; by asking, seeking, questioning, answering, and informing. Ultimately, people learn through curricula, that is *an educational experience programmed* for a *learner*; however, this institutional and systematic effort is relatively recent in historical terms and it did not become a substantial part of education in society until quite recently. The most important educational flow is still spontaneous, everyday and unregulated by either conventions or institutions.

In the case of the media education taking place in our society, the flow of learning and teaching is generally spontaneous, informal, unsystematic and unprogrammed. There are reasons for this, although recently they are losing ground. Traditionally, technology came to occupy a place in the social scene in the guise of the gradual, spontaneous assimilation of certain instruments that became part of our everyday actions through minor learning, with only simple effort at assimilation on our part. This holds true for tools, vehicles and household appliances. This was because, with the exception of highly precise professions, the set of all of the technological tools that could be incorporated into our daily lives was limited and they were all simple to use. Learning was not necessary in most cases. However, since our environment has turned hypertechnological in recent years, this situation is tending to undergo a sea change. Nowadays, the use of computers and remote networks and knowledge of their languages and conventions require more knowledge and particularly constant updates to this knowledge. This entails numerous problems. First, all of society must be predisposed to learn and develop skills regarding the new technological environment without singling out either a time or place but constantly. Without this predisposition, many opportunities to learn and develop the needed skills will be squandered. On the other hand, given the complexity of certain things to be learnt, it is clear that without the concurrence of systematic teaching and learning, it will be futile to try to achieve the competences to which we aspire.

The upshot: in relation to technology, especially ICTs, society cannot miss any opportunity to teach and learn. It must seize any learning opportunity, and almost all methods work to instruct in and learn about the use of the media.

The majority of this learning is informal, without an explicit pedagogical discourse. In informal situations, curricula, including objectives, schedules of activities and relevant teaching materials, are relegated to secondary status; they are *implicit*

in that no one seems to have established them explicitly. Yet we must acknowledge that they were set by the customs and routines or fashions, not by some kind of *secret* decision.[47]

This unprogrammed learning is more frequent in the acquisition of media competences. The consumption of media, the use of ICTs and their incessant incorporation into our everyday lives foster this kind of *non-explicit curriculum*: we learn the current uses and forget the past ones; we recognise the genres, kinds of messages, codes on which they are based; we distinguish between valid sources, the ones that can be motivators; and we ignore the discredited sources. And all of this happens spontaneously.

Generally speaking, children and youth, the elderly and media users in general learn without *formal educational mediation.* That is, they learn without an explicit curriculum, in a practical, inductive way, by themselves, noting their own mistakes and perhaps using their peers as consultants or imitating others' behaviours. Very rarely do they receive knowledge from a manual or guidebook. Everything happens as a spontaneous, *natural* phenomenon and it is in that there is no explicit curriculum. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that the current social context and the technological and media context actually impose their non-explicit, almost *secret* curriculum.

This is the context in which media skills are usually learnt. The media literacy movement, aware of its mission, has set two main objectives:

a) to build explicit, programmable and predictable curricula, and

b) to discover, reveal and criticise the implicit or secret curricula.

[47] There are more and more market studies and persuasive strategies that elude users' awareness but that are *dictated* by the markets and large corporations.

Therefore, the goal is to accept the spontaneous reality in which people learn to use media, which is a fact, but one that can be systematically used, and at the same time plan formal learning situations. By effectively programming the explicit and turning the spontaneous and implicit explicit through critical reflection, the media literacy movement is seeking to ensure more efficient and effective awareness of the media and technologies. In short, it is trying to generate conscious, critical learning, regardless of how it is acquired, that is, either through a programmed task or in informal learning situations.

All of this falls within two important dimensions. The first is a sweeping programme of educational reform in which media education occupies the prominent place it deserves. The second is the activation of an active public sphere that places media literacy at the core of social progress. In what follows, we will examine the inclusion of media education into the educational reform demanded by the Information and Knowledge Society.

A CHANGE IN EDUCATION

The general point of departure is a conviction: "to be on par with the ICT revolution and follow the pace of technological advancement in the coming years, what is needed is an *in-depth revision of the educational and training systems.* We need new interaction between *work* and *training* instead of the former interaction between *work* and *non-work,* which gives the individual the opportunity to develop their qualifications and competences and to grow in alignment with the ongoing evolution in qualifications that comes hand-in-hand with ICTs" (Delors et al., 1996).

In recent times, media literacy has come to exist at the core of this *revision.*

Educational reforms dovetail with socioeconomic demands in the environment and require new methods and new languages. When Europe's Middle Ages started to give way to the Modern Age, this paved the way for the *humanistic movement*, which had to radically change the traditional educational programme. Compared to mediaeval *scholasticism*, which revolved around reading sacred texts in the language of theology and scholastics, *studia humanitatis* gradually came to the fore.

In this way, specific knowledge prevailed over deductive knowledge and the new language of rhetoric, as an intellectual exercise in comprehension, prevailed over the axiomatic and dogmatic language common to theology. The same took place years later in the Enlightenment, which addressed the emergence of industrial capitalism with a new kind of educational pedagogy more in line with the spontaneous development of the child or apprentice. This methodology was more empirical and practical (crafts in industry) and it spurred the consolidation of scientific and technological language as the predominant language.

Mutatis mutandi, the same is happening in the 21st century. A new technological and cultural environment is calling for an educational change of methodological (and practical) and semiotic dimensions. The Information and Knowledge Society is demanding new methods for processing and producing information, which will be sought through the so-called *collective intelligence* and the network society, and new languages that will come through the *language of interaction with technology and communication.*

The convergence between these methods and languages takes place in this new media literacy curriculum. It ensures the adaptation of the new methods of information and communication while also guaranteeing that the new languages required by the new technological environment

are learnt. All of this is taking place within the context of a philosophy that focuses on new values such as networking, universal cooperation, rule building through dialogue, consensus and negotiation.

We thus see that the *revision of the educational system* and the *changes in methods and languages* are somehow one and the same.

In the section below, we shall see how all of these changes can only happen when a profound cultural shift is taking place at the same time.

New directions

In fact, when an in-depth educational reform is undertaken, it tends to take place within the context of a far-reaching cultural shift that implies serious changes in the collective mindset.

During the Renaissance, the new education encompassed a society that was becoming more dynamic, more curious, freer and more autonomous, in which the printing press served as a tool for disseminating the new spirit and the new aesthetic.[48] Thus, new personality ideals emerged, such as the *courtly scholar*,[49] who loved the letters and poetry

[48] In reference to the printing press, Roger Chartier says that it entailed "in the cities, or in the cities first, the massive entry of a new medium that modified practices — of devotion, of diversion, of information and knowledge — and redefined the relations that men and women had with the sacred, the powers that be or their communities. After Gutenberg, the entire culture of Western societies can be regarded as a culture of printed matter given that the products and presses and typographic composition were not reserved for the exclusive use of the prince's administrations, as they were in China and Korea; rather they penetrated the entire web of social relations, transported thoughts and pleasures and invaded both the public and private sphere" (1887:7-8).

[49] Cf. Raffini et al. (1998).

as much as heroic glory, and the *knight errant*, perpetually enamoured, a nomad in quest of glorious battles (Zumthor, 1993, p. 194—211). With Renaissance culture, human beings and their concerns, desires and passions came to occupy the centre of the universe, and their ability to explore new worlds, whether real or imaginary (or both at the same time), turned into their most esteemed virtue.

During the Enlightenment, the new pedagogy had to accommodate an age that needed to be shaken up through criticism and the exercise of tolerance (Voltaire, 2002), the imposition of absolute powers and any form of absolutism. It had to place a premium on craftsmanship and industry over landholding and contemplation. And it accepted the *scientific community* and the *Republic of Letters* as the public sphere that was to harbour the new lifestyle and philosophy. On one hand, its ideal person was the enlightened *philosopher*, whose battle was the political and social *revolution*, and the industrious artisan on the other hand, with his optimism about a job well done. Thus there emerged an ideal of the autonomous, critical individual governed by his own reason and the gratifying experience of his own work, endowed with a new personal, introspective sentimentality (Arendt, 2010).

In the Information and Knowledge Society, the *network economy, globalisation* and the incessant movement of scientific and technological production are the main factors spurring the transformation of educational systems and values. The model individual to which this educational transformation aspires is the *cosmopolitan citizen* who is tolerant and open to dialogue, capable of innovating, creating and adapting to change, capable of dealing with the *other* and positively accepting of cultural diversity. The *networked individual,* the one resulting from the hybridisation between

person and technology, is what is heralded with the historical advent of the 21st century.[50]

Within this context, our age has spearheaded a new orientation for education, a new roadmap for learning with four cardinal directions that are essential references: a) North: human faculties, but enriched with technology (empowerment), b) South: interaction with the new technology, but with the primacy of the human, c) East: planetary universality, but respecting differences, and d) West: a defence of diversity, but in dialogue with the universal.

A PROCESS OF *HUMANISATION*

The educational reform demanded by the Knowledge Society, and therefore the new media literacy curriculum it contains, must try to accommodate the *technological environment* (South) to the *person and their faculties* (North), giving human beings the priority they deserve. At the same time, it must situate this person, this human being, between the *demand for universality* that comes from *globalisation* (East) and the *demand for diversity* that depends on the *home communities and underlying idiosyncrasies* (West). The new humanism of our century that media literacy should fuel must be based on these four cardinal directions.

The new media literacy curriculum should provide the right language for interacting with technology, a language that enables the subject, the person, to have sufficient autonomy and trains them properly to *inhabit* and *live* in an increasingly absorbing media and technological environment. This

[50] However, contrary values are generated in a covert fashion: the revolutionary and sacrificial mysticism behind many terrorist acts or the communitarian idea that preaches a return to Eden and sometimes translates into millenarian ideologies.

literacy must necessarily entail the acceptance of new values that are always respectful of the human being viewed as a person, that is, both a corporeal being (physical person) and a social being (social person).

Media literacy therefore entails a deepening of the idea of the human person and reinforces their conscious side. In the past, Cicero and all the Humanists referring to him upheld the claim that the educated person was more human than the ignorant person. Educating and instructing are therefore tantamount to humanising; all study humanises. It is in this precise sense that media literacy can be regarded as (and focused on) a process of deepening *humanisation* and on enhancing human *dignity.* Thus, it is one way to foster the *new humanism*.

Media literacy entails the acquisition of a new culture in which *technology* and *human beings* are in harmony with and complement one another. It is a culture poised for dialogue that is itself the outcome of dialogue and communication, a culture whose ideal is a type of person who is flexible, intelligent, diligent and prepared to interact meaningfully with others through technology and with technology; a critical person who knows how to *debate* and *discuss* messages and proposals reaching them from the outside, who knows how to reveal their *interior* and their *hidden agenda.* Through this capacity, they gain the ability to imagine alternatives, changes and new courses of action. In short, they know how to be *creative* and *productive*.

And all of this unfolds within the framework of active *reflexivity,* that is, a constant effort to gain proper awareness. This reflexivity is applied to oneself and one's situation and becomes a kind of ongoing dialogue. Its result is a lucid awareness of oneself and one's environment, along with the appropriation of the instruments that the technological environment provides.

In the sections below, we will strive to analyse the way that the new media literacy curriculum is articulated into purposes and goals and organised into specific components: operative, critical and creative.

The operative component

First, we shall examine the practical, operative aspect, that is, the instrumental side. Two agendas have placed media literacy as a kind of expertise at the core of policy concerns and have determined the need for explicit media literacy curricula all over the world:

a) the agenda related to the strategy of promoting the *Information Society,* which has a primarily economic motivation; and

b) the agenda related to the implementation of the *Knowledge Society and the educational reform it entails* which, beyond the economy, is viewed as a more philosophical and ethical response to the information economy and globalisation.[51]

This should come as no surprise because both agendas are responses to both technological change, which demands an adaptation of the productive forces, and to the change in the scale of values brought about by globalisation. However, while the former is generally concerned with instrumental learning, the latter requires reflexivity, that is, a heightened moral and civic awareness.

The Information Society precisely attempts to take advantage of the momentum of technological innovation to enhance economic performance. "The ICT revolution", said

[51] We thus distinguish between the Information Society and the Knowledge Society, as UNESCO does (UNESCO, 2005).

a UNESCO report in 1996, "plays an important role in the operation of the labour market by reforming work itself, the structures of qualifications and the organisation of labour. Given the fact that the new technology is an information technology, it presupposes not only a greater basic capacity for reading, writing and calculation but also a new kind of basic competence, the capacity to interact with the new technology" (Delors et al., 1996). In this sense, the new media literacy competence, namely interacting with technology, emerges as a necessary response to an economic demand.

When dealing with the Knowledge Society, however, the demand for a new educational curriculum is more philosophical and ethical than purely economic.[52]

As happened in the Renaissance, which got its strength not only from the mercantilism of the emerging bourgeoisie but also from the revival of classical values, the response of media literacy to a global world today is not only economic but also ethical and philosophical and is expressed in terms of values. The source of the values of the Knowledge Society can be found in the *universalisation* of not just knowledge — which also has an economic dimension — but also, and primarily, of rights and responsibilities.[53]

Thus, the convergence of an *economic imperative* and *a different kind of ethics* inspires the explicit media-related curriculum of media literacy. This curriculum must be operative and practical in both the technical sense (instrumental dimension) and the civic and social sense (ethical dimension).

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[52] *The idea of the information society is based on technological breakthroughs. The concept of knowledge societies encompasses much broader social, ethical and political dimension.* (UNESCO, 2005, p. 17).

[53] *To gradually become world citizens without losing their roots and while continuing to play an active part in the life of their nation and their local community* (UNESCO, 1996, p. 15).

The critical component

The explicit curricula that emerge as *operative* and *economic* responses prioritise the capacity to adapt to technological changes. Yet media literacy also harbours an essential critical component. When media literacy is based on users' spontaneous communication practices, or when it refers to their habits when interpreting and reading media messages, in short, when it deals with this broad repertoire of codes that make up *media culture,* its priority then becomes critical. It is critical in the sense that its essential mission is to inquire, explore and shed light on the causes of this *spontaneity* in which ICTs are used; the *reasons* why we interpret media texts with a given bias or orientation; the *mechanisms* through which media communicate *world views, points of view, beliefs and ideologies,* that is, a kind of culture, which they do in a stealthy, silent way, as if they were not doing it, as if their discourse were transparent. It is critical in the sense that its prime subject is this web of stereotypes, signs, clichés, motifs and structures that make up *media culture*. The job of media literacy is to go beyond the appearances of the media discourses and uses of technology. We must unveil their deep structure, their hidden agendas, that *silent mechanism that manipulates* our minds without our being capable of recognising it, which has the appearance of transparency yet hides its real motives. Following T. Liebes and E. Katz, Luc Boltanski proposes that "the critical spectator must accept the job of *unveiling*, which sheds light on the manipulation of which it believes it is the object and to make an effort to make another way of getting involved emerge" (Boltanski, 2007, p. 271).

In this sense, media literacy draws from the theories, practices and disciplines that cultivate a *critical vantage point,* ranging from philosophy to hermeneutics, from semiotics to discourse analysis, from philology to textual

critique, cultural studies and other fields. It also assumes that signification is not a phenomenon that immediately reveals all of its mechanisms and that reading a media text has multiple dimensions and possibilities. They all accept the fact that a deepening of our critical faculties broadens our *understanding* and our *awareness.* The mission is to make the implicit explicit. For this reason, one essential component of the new media literacy curriculum is *critical reading*: the kind that helps us to become aware of the mechanisms of the process of signification, the process whereby we extract meaning from media messages. The goal is to be capable of gaining *distance* from our own communicative practices, from our way of *reading the message* and, generally speaking, from everything that is spontaneous and easy for us because that is precisely what our environment, our everyday lives, fashion and general opinion drive us to. And by gaining distance through *critical reading*, media literacy suggests to us that other ways are possible, that *reality* may not dovetail with the *message* we receive and that we can imagine *other worlds*.

Critical reading helps us to propose alternatives as we depart from the prescribed *pathways* by imagining other realities. Critical reading not only leads to critical thinking but is also an inestimable aid for creativity.

The creative component

The capacity to create or produce new knowledge by combining acquired knowledge and to generate new symbols based on ones already seen is an essential dimension in the new media literacy curriculum. If the new media and ICTs have one noteworthy characteristic today, it is their ease of use, their capacity to become media of the multitudes. We come from a time — the age of the

mass media — when the communication technologies associated with them were difficult to access and were almost exclusively within the reach of the large corporations. Today the trend is for people to be the ones to appropriate ICTs. The Web 2.0 slogan means precisely this: that any citizen can receive, share and create information. The large corporations are vacillating doubtfully between refusing to abandon their old privileged position in the world of content generation and distribution and the alternative of wholeheartedly accepting their new role as operators, that is, as the transmitters of the content that people generate themselves.[54] In the meantime, however, more and more citizens all over the world have brought the new ways of producing information into their lives and with this they have taken a major step forward toward becoming the new *communicators,* often transcending the former confines of the private, intimate circle. It is in this context that there is talk about the *alchemy of crowds* (Pisani and Piotet, 2009) and *collective intelligence* (Lévy, 2004) to refer precisely to this widespread citizen participation in a new public sphere through creative production.

None of this would happen if creativity, as a competence, had not become one of the skills of 21st century citizens. In fact, this creativity, this capacity to generate meaningful messages,

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[54] The question, therefore, is it an open or closed web? The forces leaning either way are totally at odds with each other and the ultimate denouement of this conflict is unknown. Some people defend the idea that the Internet has fostered an open world with neither frontiers nor fences that limit users', citizens' and free collectives' creativity and capacity to interact. At the other extreme, some people hope that this *infantile* stage in the web is giving way to another more mature stage in which the large corporations regain their power and control over content and the flow of information, relegating the web of the people to secondary status. The battle is ongoing and no possibility has been closed off. Regardless, the role of citizens and collectives is much more active today in Web 2.0 than it was in the days of the mass media.

is what has given rise to the most important information explosion in recent years. And it is this same creativity that has shifted from being a rare asset reserved only for a select few with special genius to becoming a democratic good within reach of everyone, a good that permeates work, social relations and everyday life, a good that is essential for the new curriculum.

In this way, *operative competence, critical reading and creativity* are the three main cornerstones of the new curricular edifice of media literacy. But none of this could remain standing without the steadfast support of *reflexivity.*

Reflexivity

Operativity, critical reading and creativity need a principle of *reflexivity.*[55] The new curriculum must develop its own *meta-knowledge* and *meta-language*; that is, it must turn to itself and analyse itself. It must know whether or not its propositions and concepts respond to changes in the environment; whether or not its terms and practices are operative in view of these changes; and finally whether or not it has enough resources to propose critical analyses, foster alternatives and *new worlds* and, in short, create.

For all of these reasons, media literacy should foster criticism and reflexivity as the only method to ensure that the objectives are attained. Media literacy's reflexivity is twofold. It is a reflection on itself, its methods, objectives, systems, languages and essentially the object itself, what we can call the *media culture.* This gives it its capacity to correct itself, to evaluate itself, and to have objective references. We will call the kind of reflexivity that examines itself as *vertical*

[55] The concept of *reflexivity* has been amply described by Anthony Giddens as an essential component of today's society and culture.

literacy. However, there is another kind of reflexivity that stems from the dialogue with other kinds of literacy, with other cultures: this is what we call *horizontal literacy*. Edgar Morin has drawn attention to the existence of three *cultures*, three kinds of literacy, we could say, in contemporary society: *"First are the impoverished 'humanities' that do not know how to connect with verifying sources (the sciences) or the everyday sources of knowledge (the media) and which reflect in a void. Secondly is a scientific culture that, due to its principles, method and structure is incapable of viewing problems as a whole and reflecting on itself. The third is the culture of the media, which effectively records the current world, the events and the news but does not have means to integrate and reflect"* (Morin, 1982, p. 242). According to Morin, these three cultures are separate, far from each other, producing an effect of *dislocation*. It is precisely this *dislocation* that must be remedied through criticism and reflection. Therefore, it could be accepted that one of the missions of the new media education curriculum would be what Morin has called for in the intellectual world as a whole: ending the separation of the three *cultures* — the humanities, science and media — and re-establish points of communication and dialogue among them. This means, according to Morin, "not only exchanges of information or ideas but also formation and ramification of a reflection on data and problems among them." "The goal is to restore everywhere," he writes, "the right, the need, the role of reflection. Reflecting means in turn: a) weighing, rethinking, letting rest, representing the event, problem or idea under diverse facets; and b) observing one's own viewpoint, reflecting on oneself in the reflection" (Morin, 1982, p. 243). In essence, then, it is an entire programme for the objective of critical thinking that media literacy is calling for and demanding. We will see below how it unfolds.

Key competence and transversality

Digital and media literacy tend to be accepted today almost universally as *key competences in the educational system*. Thus, almost all of the educational reforms undertaken in the late 20th and early 21st centuries have placed the acquisition of the new languages and competences imposed by ICTs and the new media at their core. The terms may somehow vary, but the purposes are the same as this principle is shaped into laws, curricula, educational reform programmes and infinite international documents.

UNESCO has proposed integrating technological literacy into the purposes of education while at the same time calling for a new kind of literacy to be considered, one that could be called informational and media literacy. For its part, the European Union believes that this is one of the competences that all of its member states should accept. The same holds true for Australia, the United States, Canada, many Arab countries and most Asian countries, as well as Latin America and the Caribbean. The names used diverge widely, as does the emphasis, but the overarching priority of incorporating the *dialogue with technology* is shared by all of them.

The strategies used to fulfil this purpose are also diverse. Some countries include *specific subjects* related to digital or media literacy. Therefore, they have unique programmes and subjects. Others, however, choose *curricular transversality* as a strategy. They believe that the capacity to critically obtain information from the media as well as mastery of the skills that enable people to produce, create and communicate using ICTs is part of any subject and required of all students and teachers. Others have decided to integrate media education in a practical, informal way, as a complement or perhaps a replacement for specific subjects or transversal ways of handling it. Thus, outside of the programme, school

newspapers and magazines are published, radio broadcasts are managed and a small audiovisual production system is developed, giving participants the chance to directly learn how to use the media. There are also, obviously, open combinations of all three of these models.

As a whole, they share the idea that media literacy is a basic skill, one that supports many others and that it therefore should not solely be *taught* as a specific field of knowledge, nor simply as a skill, nor as a collective *practice*. Rather, it should be viewed as the systematic integration of all of them at the same time that combines values, critical perspectives and creativity so that the autonomous, aware individual may actively participate in an updated public sphere.

Chapter 7

TEACHER TRAINING

EDUCOMMUNICATION

In the 1970s, when McLuhan (1960) wrote about the "classroom without walls", saying that the media contested the educational pre-eminence of the school, he would never have been able to imagine what occurs nowadays. Today's youth live, in part, in a media bubble: mobile phones, the Internet, online video games, social networks, etc. Thus, the pre-eminence of the school is discussed now more than ever. Nevertheless, the possibilities of the same school have also radically changed. If the school of years past could only handle, more or less passively, the media's flow of communication, today it has sufficient means for communicating and producing its own flow of communication: social and school networks are being created; documents are shared online; educational blogs are being improved; *educational platforms* and *educational multimedia repositories* are being used; e-books have become a topic of discussion, etc. This is how the *connected* school has emerged. A traditional institution that has spent centuries with very traditional technologies (revolving around writing and books) is starting to systematically rely, since the late 20th and early 21st century, on an *aura* of communication that is becoming more and more important. No one seems to question that the future fate of learning is *technologically enhanced* learning. The time of *e-learning* has come, as a replacement for the old *distance education*. ICTs and the media play a role in almost all educational activities: in the classroom, as part of studying, learning, work experiences, cooperative activities, etc. It is the opportunity for the creation

of teaching staffs and student bodies distributed throughout dispersed territories, as well as for systematic collaboration between educational centres and students from different cultures, regions, languages and customs. Global *e-learning*, global in the sense of space and time, seems to have made a place for itself in our everyday routines. And it is precisely this *connected* school, this global *e-learning*, that commands a new communicative competence from teachers and students. We will call it *educommunication*. Just as the appearance of the book and the press gave rise to a new individual consciousness, ICT-enhanced learning is creating a *new* type of education, *educommunication*[56]. This is knowledge that is created at the crossroads of communication and education. It interests teachers, students, as well as all media with an educational slant in general, and naturally joins forces with the media literacy movement. *To educate through communication* is a requirement for all educators who want to *communicate* with their students and, at the same time, relate to the universal teaching staff (the new *republic of educational letters*, as Erasmus of Rotterdam or Kant would say) that is being created with help from ICTs.

THE *CONNECTED* AND *COMMUNICATING* SCHOOL

Educommunication requires educators (and will require more in the future) to have a certain *media consciousness* and *active competence* with regard to ICTs. Today's classrooms can be organised, in terms of communication with devices that are not only able to obtain information and *disseminate*

[56] J. I. Aguaded, among others, uses the term 'educommunication' as equivalent to media literacy. Here, we limit its use to the specific communication competences of the educational community. *Education for communication is thus revealed as one of the essential factors for keeping the pace of educational progress in line with human development* (Aguaded, 1995)

it, but that can also set up *cognitive cooperative networks* that involve both those who are present as well as those who are absent. Studying, in turn, can always be done in networked learning communities. Observation, exploration, analysis, documentation, communication of knowledge: all of these activities are already being *measured* by ICTs and will increasingly be so over time, requiring more and better educommunication skills from the educational community and strengthening the *connected* school.

The educational community, considered in itself, will grow with the support of the new media. It will bring together not only those who are *in* the educational centres and who are closely related to them (parents, guardians, families, etc.), but also many others (experts, professionals, politicians, workers, etc.). An educating and educational society is being born and the school (in the broad sense) will not be a *connected* school, supported by ICTs, but rather a *communicating* school. In other words, a school will actively participate at the heart of an educational society that gets involved, and should gradually become more involved, in debate, clarification and decisions related to public matters.

In the same way that the *vita attiva* (active life) concept, taken from classic Rome, motivated certain 16th century humanists to participate (as a universal community) in the issues of their time, today's educators, and today's students, have, based on the *communicating school* concept, the opportunity to be seen, noticed and felt by society, to have their voices heard and, essentially, to participate in society as an educational community. Their contribution to a civilisation that is increasingly in need of knowledge and all types of *educational experiences* will be fundamental. No self-respecting university would exist without an effective and efficient relationship with the productive and intellectual system of the public sphere. Likewise, primary, nursery and

basic schools must relate to their immediate environment (where the communication media also obviously exist) in order to influence their context and ensure the basis of a true educational society.

If *educommunication* ensures the effectiveness, in the connected school, of technologically enhanced educational communication, *media education*, in turn, favoured by the *communicating* school, will favour the educational community's participation in the public sphere. And both *educommunication* and *media literacy* will comprise the new educational culture of the new school.

The semiotic plurality of the new school literacy

The message, fully adopted by the media literacy movement, is that the knowledge society's new literacy must be multi-semiotic and multimedia-based and must reach the educational centres and be integrated into their education programmes. For a long time, education in schools has been dominated by the primacy of writing, which dominated the assimilation of knowledge, assessment and study. Thus, it experienced a two-fold reduction: reduction of *orality* to *word* and, later, reduction of *word* to *letter.* Thus, the richness of oral communication was lost, which includes, from all points of view, a significant dimension of musicality, proxemics, gestural communication, spatial relationship, specific closeness and sensorial perception between those speaking. Multiple and complex semiotics was thus reduced to the word, i.e., to a relationship between a significant phonetic unit (morpheme) and a unit with an intellectual meaning (concept), in other words, biplane semiotics without the multi-faceted complexity of orality. Another reduction occurred later: the word, which harboured a meaning related to emotions and sound, was *translated*

into a graphic sign that recently, due to the role of mobile presses, has dropped the *resonance* of handwritten symbols. What was lost along the way? Almost everything: the multidimensionality of communication, its complexity, ambiguity, emotional richness, pragmatic force and many other things that are difficult to summarise. Obviously, with writing, there were advantages in other areas: in the scope of thought, in the ease of implementing logical reasoning, etc. But all of that fostered abstraction, a distancing between those speaking, and could even break down a certain ability of emotional understanding between those speaking.

The new media and new languages, which have introduced the audiovisual aspect and recovered, to a certain extent, the richness of orality, in a way subvert the educational semiotic establishment. Save blindness, the goal can no longer be education that focuses only on traditional reading and writing. How is it possible that, after having gone to school, a person is not able, together with the ability to decipher written texts, to read images and audiovisual texts or to understand, in short, the complexity of a multimedia project? As a result, the new literacy of education in schools has to be multi-semiotic and multimedia-based. Responsible education cannot neglect this task and thus cannot ignore the goal of literacy that is semiotic, multimedia and complex. Just as the Renaissance humanists preferred the dialectics of dialogue to scholastic logic[57] (without abandoning the latter), the new education must complement essential classic literacy in reading and writing with the richness and broadness of the semiotic multi-dimensionality of human communication, clearly including here the recovery of orality.

[57] *In the intellectual baggage of 'humanistic' studies, there was a significant omission: logic. But instead of the closed fist of logic, the humanists preferred the open, outstretched hand of rhetoric, which favoured the weapon of persuasion* (Burke, 2010, p. 45).

The new role of the teacher

With an increase in the various demands related to educational reform (new types of literacy, renewal of the school's technology and communication, the building of larger educational communities, etc.), it becomes important to update the role of the teacher. Teachers of the new educational institution will, as always, continue performing their essential duties: mentoring and guiding the learning process, transferring values and attitudes, controlling the conditions under which learning and educational communication are carried out, assessing the progress made, the process *governance* strategy, etc. But others will have to be acquired[58], namely:

- Teachers will design the contexts, situations and circumstances for the teaching and learning processes and these will have increasing support from the ICTs.
- They will dedicate a good part of their time to updating, adapting, obtaining and creating the teaching materials used in their educational activity and these materials will be increasingly multimedia-based and will have to be updated faster.
- They will spend a good part of their time organising and managing the school community's flows of communication, which will preferably be carried out using ICTs and new media.
- They will intensively work with ICTs, which will require them to maintain a good level of skills in this field.
- They will increase their connections with other colleagues and experts that are not physically nearby and this will

[58] Obviously, the demands will also vary from one teaching staff to another depending on the socio-cultural contexts. But here we are generally referring to those that we consider to be characteristic and trends that will affect, from a communication point of view, the model of the educational institution of the future.

depend on their ability to create cooperative virtual networks.

- They will relate to students who are increasingly skilful in handling communication technologies and more *occupied* with ICT-related activities; this will require teachers not only to implement new educational practices and styles but also to *address* and *understand* the psychosocial influence that the new media have on their students.
- Teachers will have to acknowledge *new relationships* related to the distribution of duties, capacities and *power* that are created at the heart of the educational activity as a result of the transformation imposed by technology-enriched education.

When teachers cannot meet all of these demands due to financial, institutional or psychological reasons, uncertainty and unease begin to grow. An adequate education policy is needed to lay the foundations to end this negativity. Without a doubt, a good teacher-training policy, accompanied by effective reforms in other areas, will contribute to the solution.

An initial training programme for media-education teachers

From 16 to 18 June 2008, at UNESCO's Headquarters in Paris, a group of international experts met to carry out an original initiative: the joint development of an initial teacher training curriculum related to media and information literacy. This was an attempt to meet, through a global initiative, the almost-universal demands of teacher training in this subject matter. The group was comprised of experts from different continents, specialties and countries. Based on a core document prepared by Professor Pérez Tornero[59],

[59] He was the director of the Vladimir Gai experiment.

the group reached a consensus regarding the programme that this initial curriculum should have. The next step was to apply this curriculum to different countries and realities, thus creating a first comparative experiment that would make it possible to validate the obtained results.

The experiment is still being conducted and its results will be published in the near future. However, what was important was that, for the first time in this field, a certain consensus was reached with regard to what should be included in a basic module designed to educate teachers about media literacy.

This content was summarised in a concise guide that includes five *theoretical* thematic sections, which make up the conceptual core, and six practical skills that teachers should possess.

The theoretical sections are:

A) *Introduction:* What is media and information literacy?
   A.1. The conceptual framework of media and information literacy. Levels and strategies.

B) *Understanding communication and information*:
   B.1. Elements and key factors of information and education.
   B.2. Resources: ICTs.
   B.3. Signs, languages and semiotics.

C) *The use and reading of media information:*
   C.1. Critical reading of messages.
   C.2. Information and media discourse.
   C.3. Media uses and habits.
   C.4. Young children and media context.
   C.5. Local and global media.
   C.6. Local and global cultures.

D) *Strategies for media and information literacy in education:*
   D.1. The promotion of a media-based learning environment.

D.2. Communication in the school and learning environment.
D.3. Media literacy, formal and informal learning.

E) *Communication, production and participation:*
E.1. Promotion of cultural diversity: media literacy and expression.
E.2. Media literacy and content production.
E.3. Media literacy and participation.

In addition, the curriculum proposes six practical goals:

a) Design, organisation and carrying out of communication processes;
b) Advanced use of ICTs with communication and educational objectives;
c) Design, organisation and implementation of educational media in schools;
d) Design, organisation and carrying out of educational media-related activities;
f) Design and application of *assessment* and evaluation systems.

Structure and reasons for the programme

The programme proposed by UNESCO is a starting point. This means that, as it is being applied, it must be adapted and contextualised to each situation, country, learning system, educational centre, student group, etc. Thus, its structure is what is important. This structure provides, first, a core of basic knowledge, which starts with an understanding of the conceptual framework of media literacy and includes the principles of communication. In this way, teachers have a comprehensive overview of the field in which they must work, without favouring any particular sign system or media. They know the principles of the theory of communication, from the perspective of information and the systems theory, as well as from the socio-cultural point of view. This general knowledge

is complemented by the concepts that are necessary for understanding the *process of reading* (use, interpretation and comprehension) media messages. In this case, the concepts used come from semiotics and textual analysis, from pragmatics and sociology (precisely, when it concerns uses). This approach is useful for any type of language (verbal and non-verbal, iconic and textual), technology or context. Special emphasis is placed on children and youth because it is assumed that they are the students with which the teaching staff will be working. Likewise, considering the difference between local and global contexts makes it possible to look at the communication analysis from a situational and material point of view: in other words, significance always understood within its specific context.

The following sections include two essential objectives: a) *the creation of media-based educational contexts* and b) *the promotion of situations that foster participation and cultural diversity*. In this way, the teacher-training curriculum emphasises the structuring power of ICTs and new media. These can substantially change the educational contexts and decisively influence the renewal of the public sphere. As will be seen, teaching staffs are being provided with useful knowledge that they can put into practice in order to improve their activities, even beyond media literacy. The general view of the symbolic communication phenomenon represented by the media is applied a) in the school setting, but also in b) the civic setting. Theoretical knowledge is combined with applied knowledge. General principles are combined with practical precepts. With the above, the teaching staff or educational centre can select cases and examples as well as describe realities that are close to their context. However, they will describe these using general principles that will be useful for understanding the reality and performing specific tasks.

It is obvious that this theoretical knowledge implicitly includes values such as *cultural diversity*, *complementarity*

between the global and local, critical thinking, the *value of dialogue, education for peace* and *participation*. These are essential values for the general mission of media literacy.

Practical skills

According to UNESCO's curriculum, once teachers have gone through the training programme, they are considered to have the following practical skills:

Design, organisation and carrying out of communication processes. This includes the ability to organise and manage: a) personal communication processes from a debate to a presentation and including communications within the framework of a cooperative group and b) various aspects of school communication, such as events, informative campaigns, etc. Therefore, the programme understands that media literacy must pay attention to personal communication processes, regardless of the role played by ICTs. This is why aspects such as oral communication, iconic communication, as well as direct and personal relationships have become important.

Design, organisation and implementation of school media and educational media. A school newspaper that is distributed to the school's educational community, a school radio station that is broadcast for a nearby community, and even a small audiovisual service that serves a school or website are all examples of *school media*. These are the focus of UNESCO's programme. But it also looks at media that, without being school-related, is educational and can help with a school's tasks: educational television channels, cultural magazines, scientific publications, etc. The teachers who complete the programme will acquire specific competences related to the two types of media (school and educational), which will be very useful as they perform their professional duties.

Design, organisation and implementation of educational activities related to media education. The programme seeks to train teachers to: a) design curricular programmes related to media education that are aimed at specific students; b) prepare analysis and debate activities regarding messages, incorporating critical reading; c) create teaching materials related to media use and lastly d) carry out both formal and informal activities related to media education.

Development and application of media literacy assessments. Finally, teachers will acquire the skills necessary to perform an assessment (initial or otherwise) of their students in order to determine the progress made in their media education programmes and activities. This is one of the essential objectives of the training module.

Altogether, these skills fully enable teachers to impart media education and, at the same time, organise the school's media environment (ICTs and other media) in order to improve the educational communication activities and enhance their students' media literacy.

Systematic development of teacher training

The curriculum proposed by UNESCO is a starting point. Nevertheless, teacher training (at all education levels) related to media literacy requires a systematic effort on the part of the education authorities and members of the education community.

To set this effort in motion, certain initial difficulties must be overcome:

1. Infrastructure and access problems.
2. Lack of flexibility in technology.
3. Confusion between the spontaneous use of ICTs and adoption by students.

4. Psychological resistance on the part of teachers to incorporating ICTs.
5. Inertias of school culture.

The first two difficulties have to do with the current state of technological development, which varies significantly from one country to another. In any case, the lack of access and connectivity and the non-specific application of ICTs within the school framework are serious problems. An improvement in the investments in education and greater demands made on the communication industry by the educational sector would be positive developments. Nevertheless, in anticipation that this will not be easy to achieve within a limited period of time, there is no other choice but to work toward adaptation; in each context and situation, it is possible to have some type of media technology. From oral communication to the Internet, there are many possible scales of development. Therefore, teacher training must start with this specific adaptation to each context with a view to obtaining the maximum benefit from the available technologies. Thus, it is a question of refraining from the dismissal of any technology as outdated or obsolete and instead taking advantage of all of its potential regarding future developments.

The second difficulty gives rise to a contradictory situation. Children and youth, especially in countries with easy access to technologies, have highly developed practical knowledge regarding the use of new media: mobile phones, chat services, social networks, etc. This skill knowledge, sometimes notable, discourages teachers because they fear that their students will know significantly more than they do when covering these subject matters in class. Nonetheless, it is necessary to separate *operational knowledge* of media from *reflective and critical knowledge*. Youth tend to have the first and lack the second. Thus, their spontaneous operation of media is not a conscious adoption that commands reflection and autonomy

from the subject. Teachers, on the other hand, can provide the references that are necessary for reflection and, in a joint task with their students, use them to achieve a true learning process that results in adoption by the students. For that reason, programmes that train teachers in ICTs and new media must emphasise the reflective aspect of knowledge and media literacy in addition to training them in cooperative learning that is not a matter of identifying the teacher's role with instruction but rather with guiding joint learning and reciprocal teaching. In fact, that is how media education can become a very pleasant task for teachers, who can greatly benefit from a frank and direct relationship with their students.

The fourth aspect, the teaching staff's psychological resistance to the use of ICTs, stems from different sources. But supposing, in general, the teaching staff's willingness and correct dedication to its task, the more common resistances in all countries of the world are due to a feeling of instability and uncertainty that the constant educational reforms (many of them based on the introduction of new technologies) have signified for teachers in recent years. This is the "*corrosion of character*" that Sennett talks about when considering the reality of work today: instability, constant change, a lack of assessment of the professionals, etc. (Sennett, 1999). As a result of all of this, the *educational mission* has been seriously affected and a *teaching discomfort* has appeared in almost all social and cultural contexts. In addition to this instability, teachers also feel that the incentives that children and youth receive from the media, and from society in general, contradict the set of values promoted by education. For this reason, teachers tend to see technological change as a supplementary factor that is partially to blame for their strong sense of discomfort.

The only way to resolve this resistance and discomfort is to include the incorporation of ICTs in programmes that are

very reasoned, justified and relevant. Motivation can only come from two sources: a) that ICTs resolve and simplify the teacher's tasks, never making them more difficult; b) that they provide very precise psychological or practical gratification: increased interest and *pleasure of educating*; improvement in the relationship with the students; improvement of the system's effectiveness; fostering of cooperation, etc. If, on the other hand, the result is difficulties and increased complexity, relationship and management problems, frustrations, etc., there is the risk of ruining the process of incorporating the ICTs into education precisely due to the failure of teacher training.

Lastly, the general problem that summarises those mentioned above and affects teacher training is the inertia in a school culture that resists change.

Media literacy as an instrument of change in the school culture

We call *school culture* the set of languages, methods, uses, rules, conventions and codes that govern the educational centres and establish a certain *tradition*. Much of this school culture concerns aspects such as the technological instruments used in the schools, spaces, organisation of schedules, nature of the teaching materials, etc. Thus, when ICTs are incorporated into an institution like a school, they are altering, whether it is accepted or not, each and every one of these aspects. The Internet, for example, introduces the global space, cuts down on the amount of time needed to obtain information, creates new contact networks and changes the nature of the teaching materials. But the same thing happens with mobile phones, computers, electronic blackboards, telematic networks, etc. Nevertheless, what normally changes in the school culture's organisation and

architecture when ICTs are introduced? Practically nothing or only partial aspects of that culture. For example, everyone agrees that ICTs have to change the educational methods, but few realise (or at least admit without great difficulty) that these changes require a modification of the school timetable, change in the organisation of teaching spaces and a serious transformation of the nature of the teaching materials. Therefore, faced with timid movements of change in some aspects of the school culture, we come across others that remain unaltered, due to action or omission, but that finally become a true obstacle to reform.

This is where media literacy clashes with a school culture's inertia. And this cannot be resolved with teacher training only because it depends on other factors as well, such as the authorities' educational policies, resources, mentality, etc. In any case, however, we know that without a change in that culture, we will not obtain the appropriate media literacy. In fact, as we have repeated throughout this book, media literacy signifies a cultural change and this change is global. It would be good if all of the programmes that train teachers in media literacy could include this consideration of cultural change in education as one of their fundamental aspects. Or, similarly, all of the media-education training programmes should include an aspect of critique and reflection on the practice and school culture in the broad sense.

It is a question of having a holistic and comprehensive view of the educational system. A technological transformation is, thus, a transformation of language, perspective and vision, but also of methodology and practice. And these changes cannot be made within a rigid and inflexible framework. This is why teacher training in ICTs and media education should be established as a new challenge of transforming the school institution.

Chapter 8

NEW CITIZENS, INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND MEDIA LITERACY: AN EDUCATION FOR PEACE

New objectives for media education

Literacy for all was originally considered necessary from two points of view. The first was economic: neither workers nor industry, which was increasingly sophisticated, could prosper and be effective without the ability to read or write. The second was civic: only by being able to read and write could one fully share in civic values and be in a position to participate democratically in society. That is why compulsory literacy, economic development, the universal right to vote and civil patriotism were very intertwined in many countries throughout the world in the 19th century. As a whole, access to literacy was the passport to national citizenship.

Nowadays, more or less the same thing is occurring with media literacy. It is required from an economic point of view: without it the development of the information society would remain at a standstill. Yet it is also required from the civil point of view. Global society calls for global and democratic citizens. Without media literacy, this new citizenship is unachievable. Therefore, universal or global citizenship is synonymous with media literacy for all.

In addition, the values associated with literacy assimilate some of the values from the past yet place them in a new context. It is no longer a matter of values that justify voting

on state decisions; it is a matter of participating in global decision making that affects the planet. It is not just a matter of promoting national patriotism, but the feeling of universal citizenship inherent in cosmopolitan patriotism. It is not just a matter of the citizen's dignity, but the dignity of humanity as a whole. Media literacy, therefore, calls for new values.

An indication of the type of values that should be related to media literacy is given to us by Víctor Ordóñez, professor in Manila and former director of the UNESCO Basic Education Division: *We can create experts in information technologies, yet it seems we are unable to improve the capacity for listening, for tolerance, for respecting diversity, for making the most of people's potential for the social good, or for the spreading of fundamental ethics, without which neither skills nor knowledge will be of any benefit to us* (UNICEF, 1995).

Let's take note of that: a) capacity for listening, namely for understanding, for talking; b) tolerance; c) respect for diversity; d) ethics. There is no doubt that these values, placed within the framework of global citizenship, are the values that must be associated to the promotion of media literacy. They, therefore, constitute new objectives.

The value of intercultural dialogue

Intercultural dialogue in itself is decisive for the survival and sustainability of the planet. Why, however, does it need to be associated with media literacy?

In 2007, when the UN launched its Alliance of Civilisations programme, one of its first initiatives was to build the Media Literacy Education Clearinghouse and, together with UNESCO, the Media Literacy and Intercultural

Dialogue Unitwin Chairs[60]. The creation by UNESCO of a chair in global e-learning at the University of Tampere, Finland[61] is also significant. All of these initiatives stem from the recognition that media literacy and global education can contribute to understanding between cultures and civilisations. The reasons are clear. Nowadays, communication media are active constructors of the view that each human group has of itself and of others. They also represent a communication bridge between communities and groups, especially since the spread of ICT. Therefore, they can contribute to generating conflicts and differences or, on the contrary, to bringing about dialogue and understanding. If citizens improve their media competence, they can contribute to representing a serious demand for the mass media to provide information that is in accordance with peace and harmonious international relations. If, however, this demand disappears, it is quite likely that media discourse runs the risk of veering toward populism

[60] An initiative in which the University of Cairo, the Autonomous University of Barcelona, the University of San Paolo, Temple University, and other universities are participating with the aim of promoting research, education and training on the subject of cultural dialogue and media literacy.

[61] This chair has promoted the idea of the Global University System (GUS, see www.globaluniversitysystem.info). GUS aims to build a higher level of humanity with mutual understanding across national and cultural boundaries for global peace (Varis et al., 2003). The mission of GUS is to help higher educational and healthcare institutions in remote/rural areas of developing countries to deploy broadband Internet in order for them to close the digital divide. One of the principles of GUS is cultural sensitivity without fragmentation or homogenisation. New humanism is committed to the goal of counteracting the depersonalising effects of mass technology. But rather than limiting itself to the aim of meeting the purely personal needs of its participants, it is expected that its educational programs will encourage a sharing of minds and hearts across personal, disciplinary, scientific and cultural barriers.

and sectarianism. On the other hand, if citizens from all over the world improve their communicative capacity, it is quite certain that the strength of their expression and self-presentation before the world will contribute to respecting diversity as well as to considering the *other* as an equal and a speaker.

All of this points out that education and media literacy find a *raison d'être* in intercultural dialogue. According to the Memorandum of Understanding between UNESCO and the United Nations, the current global challenges need urgent attention and action in order to guarantee peaceful coexistence, harmony and interaction between people with different cultural backgrounds by way of dialogue between cultures. In this context, the communication media are thought to be in a strategic position when it comes to promoting broad international dialogue, provided that they are given the freedom and independence to do so. They play a vital role in organising perceptions and points of view of other cultures and religions and, therefore, have a unique responsibility with regard to promoting and endorsing tolerance throughout the world.

For media literacy, this includes a new commitment and a new objective. The objective is to create a peaceful and interdependent world that constitutes a good place to live. Just as Elise Boulding (1988) stated, no society can impose a universal order on another society. Therefore, the creation of any type of global identity must be in harmony with cultural diversity, and this is the major challenge. Consequently, if an authentic knowledge and information society must be constituted, particular attention should be paid to the different sets of values, to current behavioural guidelines and to the peaceful coexistence of all of these. Promoting media literacy doubtlessly constitutes an opportunity to promote all of these values.

A HOMOGENEOUS IDENTITY?

Is technological development unidirectional, as television was in its time?[62] Judging by the predominance of North American industries in the field of telecommunications, information technology and electronics (only slightly challenged by Japan and more recently by China and Europe), it seems that technology is flowing from the United States to the rest of the world. If it is happening in this way with the film and television industry, which imposes topics, values and characters on the rest of the world[63], what might the consequences be if the main social networks, the major computer designers and manufacturers, the big Internet search engines and the owners of the most widely used operating systems are all North American?

Not many studies have been carried out on this issue yet, but the impression that is spreading (just as it happened with other media) is that a certain Americanisation of the world is taking place. The growing weight of English as a language of work and international communication[64] as well as the spreading of lifestyles linked to youth culture clearly reflect a North American predominance. Will all of this promote the homogenisation and Americanisation of identity throughout the entire world?

The matter is certainly not to be taken lightly, not only because if this were the case we would be losing cultural diversity, but also because we would be wasting the enormous possibility for interaction and participation that new technologies create. Without a doubt, however, the most worrying aspect would be that radical and conflict-ridden reactions would

[62] Nordenstreng and Varis, 1976.

[63] The Indian film industry is barely able to steal some of the limelight from the US industry.

[64] Crystal, 1997.

be aroused in response to this one-way process and from the pressure it represents, which would make co-existence very difficult.

It is for this reason, in order to avoid these risks, that associating media literacy with intercultural dialogue is so very important. It is necessary to bear in mind that the dynamics of globalisation must be joined with those of interculturality, that improving media competences must include favourable attitudes toward tolerance and understanding of diversity, and that freedom of expression must grow alongside a sense of universal responsibility. The prospect of a homogenisation of identities must be replaced by a responsibility to sustain diversity.

An agenda for intercultural dialogue

In what way can media literacy contribute to building a peaceful and harmonious global public sphere?

From our point of view, an urgent agenda could be drawn up with a view to achieving this objective. This agenda would be based on the following principles:

1. *Fighting the digital and cognitive divide:* Equality of access and ability to participate in the global public sphere is essential. Nevertheless, we must now stress not so much the availability of technology, but the equal distribution of the cognitive competences needed to be able to use this technology.
2. *Stimulating international cooperation and participation*: efforts to overcome the digital divide must be accompanied by strengthened promotion of creating, communicating and interacting in new communicative networks. Viewing identities and cultural diversity globally can only be achieved if groups and individuals

from the various cultures are active, express their points of view and defend their positions through dialogue. In the current world situation, however, this calls for an effort to create systematic cooperation between different countries with the subsequent exchange of resources and experiences.

3. *A global education*: By this we do not just mean media literacy reaching global status, that is, responding to international strategies for cooperation (an essential aspect from all points of view). The education system, which until now has been extremely dependent on national policies, must build more international bridges and be based on cooperation between countries and people. This will require a change of model: *Treating communities and their children and young people as passive recipients of education has led to alienation and to the feeling that education in its current format is irrelevant for people* (Frase and Restrepo-Estrada, 1998).
4. Education must therefore open up to global interaction. Education programmes must be the fruit of cooperation and communication between people. Present-day technologies are starting to enable this and global media literacy can help us to achieve this.
5. *Revitalising the global public sphere:* Internationalism and acceptance of cultural diversity mean having citizens who are committed to what happens to the planet and who are aware of the global scope of its problems. Only a media-based public sphere that promotes and gives direction to people's participation can foster this new type of citizenship. This requires profound reforms in the organisation of the current communication networks as well as in their flows. Yet it is also true that only by promoting global participation will these reforms begin to take place.

6. *Integrating communication values:* This new global media literacy will require a new balance between the values specific to communication, a new ethic of global responsibility or a deeper understanding of the values that have been accepted until now. Thus, new media literacy must be based on the following principles:
   a. Balance between freedom of expression and information and the right to information and transparency.
   b. Balance between the various dominant communication flows, both in content development and technological development. This (linguistic, cultural and geographical) balance will require new rules, a new respect for *alterity* and new bridges for cooperation between cultures.
   c. Balance between the values of intellectual property and those of use, between private interests and group or common interests. It is only in this way that the prevailing right to circulation can be complemented by interaction. The new international public sphere can only be based on the harmonious participation of all, excluding information flows that are exclusively vertical.
7. Finally, *the creation of a culture of peace and peaceful understanding between communities and people must be the ultimate value for media literacy:* this means accepting the elementary principle that no one is right without dialogue and there is no peace without freedom and justice.

The challenge of the 21st century is putting communicators, teachers, politicians, scientists, authorities, the technology industry, the media and civil society together while understanding the global challenges of media literacy as part of a global education. This means attributing to media competence the enormous role that it has in a world of global

communication and knowing how to take advantage of the potential that the ICTs have in order to improve our world. Yet none of this will happen if it is not accepted that this task must be directed by the values and practices of a new humanism that we must all regain and invent. Only this new humanism will lead us to peace.

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