Media Education in Action

A Research Study in Six European Countries

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PART TWO – RESEARCH AND STUDIES

Preface

Empowering Education through Media Literacy

Media Education has a tradition of decades in Europe with at least two different sources of inspiration. In the 1970s and 1980s it was basically a critical movement, an ethical and political response to the growing influence of mass media. But it was a voluntary and dispersed movement.

In the 1980s and 1990s, in general, Media Education moved away from its critical focus towards a more practical education to serve of the emerging information society. Then it focused on the need to give students the new skills required by digital computers and the Internet.

However, in the early twenty-first century, because of media convergence and consolidation of the information society, the two sources of inspiration, critique and practice, were reunited and began to form a single discipline in which they combine critical thinking, promoting Media Literacy and creativity. It was in that moment when Europe began to become aware of the necessity to institutionalize and systematically promote a new model of Media Education. That meant admitting that: a) all citizens must acquire the new skills demanded by the media (digital and non digital), and at the same time, b) the necessity of a critical sense that allows everyone to be autonomous in relation to the media messages and become active citizens involved in decision making.

This is the reason behind the various legislative and policy initiatives taken by Parliament and the Commission and many European governments. It also explains why Media Education and Media Literacy have evolved into a key action agenda for education, cultural and economic policy for Europe. This is the context in which Europe began a new process, the early stages of what became a quick and far reaching way of the universal extension of Media Literacy. Hence the value and importance of the research presented here.

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The study by Ranieri, Parola and others constitutes an excellent tool to empower the education system through Media Literacy and education. It falls within the specific context of school education and systematizes the best experiences of Media Education in different European countries. The researchers have collected experiences in which the use of media has led to an improvement in learning of various subjects, whilst also being able to advance in Media Literacy. The study provides a rich and diverse picture of how Media Education is understood across Europe and of the more successful related projects.

The study is very useful to these effects as it is possible to learn substantially from the experience. It is also possible to use it as an effective tool to design the future of Media Education at the same time.

Indeed, the experiences of Media Education that are selected are described as per their objectives, methods and results. Therefore, any teacher at any level and any subject can gain not only an introduction to the design of Media Education projects, but also a sort of 'grammar' in Media Education. It may, therefore, if you wish: a) re-play a concrete experience, or b) select some of the items that compose several experiences and combine them in a new way with specific objectives and contexts.

On the other hand, the study also gives an insight as to direction and trends of Media Education in Europe.

So that both teachers and researchers will find this work an analysis of the situation and an excellent guide for the design and development of their own projects.

The study goes beyond the scope of just an investigation. It is an action research project. In fact, the data provided may be the seed to a European network of media educators or simply a network of people interested directly or indirectly through Media Literacy. People who have lived a particular experience of Media Education projects or research on them, and therefore can from now share experiences and results.

Therefore, we must thank the authors and their collaborators for their excellent work that is already a key milestone in advancing Media Literacy on the continent. They have managed to select and find facts, living realities, away from general abstractions or mere statement of principles. They reflect reality and provide a useful guide for the design of Media Literacy projects.

Finally, the authors have succeeded in initiating a development that should not lose momentum. In fact, its database, its catalogue of experiences -if it is upgraded and enriched gradually- is going to be a must for Media Education across the continent and worldwide.

Thus, with advances such as this study, with the patience and the system that it reflects, Media Education will become a powerful and unstoppable power within the European educational curriculum. And this is how it will be renewing the educational system to make

them a source of life and development of individuals and societies. The reader can verify that the study represents a kind of celebration of the efforts, creativity and dedication with which many anonymous teachers throughout Europe make their task and try to achieve the miracle of transferring our culture from generation to generation.

José Manuel Pérez Tornero*

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A. Parola
M. Ranieri

Introduction

Media Education (ME) has come a long way. Today, it can no longer be considered a field of study reserved for semiotic and communication researchers. Nor can it be regarded as a privileged practice of those teachers, who for some reason consider media of fundamental importance. On one hand, ME is now part of the agenda of international organizations, from UNESCO to the European Union. These organizations consider ME and the development of media competences a necessary requisite to fully exercise citizenship in the current contemporary society. On the other, educational practices based on the media and technologies are becoming more widespread in school, even though such practices are conducted with variable degrees of awareness and teachers are not supported by adequate training.

Faced with these booming practices and initiatives, some research areas deserve further development, particularly on the pedagogical-educational and assessment levels[1]. In a way, what we are talking about is promoting greater pedagogical awareness among educators and teachers regarding the aims and ways of implementing ME through the elaboration of appropriate educational models to develop students' media and digital competences. This dimension has recently been highlighted by various writers[2]. For example, Jacquinot observes: «[...] too often we

[1] Ceretti F., Felini D., Giannatelli R. (Eds.), *Primi passi nella Media Education*, Erickson, Trento 2006; and Trinchero R., *Valutare la competenza mediale*, in A. Parola (Ed.), *Territori mediaeducativi*, Erickson, Trento 2008, pp. 327-337.

[2] Calvani A., *Dove va la Media Education? Riflessioni sull'identità della M. E. nella società contemporanea*, «Media Education. Studi, ricerche, buone pratiche», 1, 1, 2010, pp.13-25; and Jacquinot G., *De quelques repérages pour la recherche en education aux médias*, in P. Verniers (Ed.), *EuroMeduc. L'éducation aux medias en Europe. Controverses, défis et perspectives*, EuroMeduc, Bruxelles 2009, pp. 143-151.

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forget to work on educational theories or concepts that are at the root of media education problems, and in schools, on the pedagogical methods used by media education experts»[3]. The (undesirable) side effects of this scarce awareness of theories and methods are interventions often based on implicit assumptions which are not discussed or are not very clear: «Actions are taken, (so-called good) practices are catalogued, policies are developed and assessments are made, but most of the times the theories that inspire them are not made clear»[4], and – we add – nor are the relative assessment criteria.

At the same time, the quantity and quality of research on ME practices need to be enhanced, both to assess their effectiveness and for training purposes, with the perspective of fostering critical attitudes among teachers on the «reflective practitioner» model outlined by Schön[5]. Assessment and research on/of practices cannot obviously neglect a reflection on theories and criteria. There is therefore an inseparable connection between research on practices and definition of models and pedagogical-didactic theories: reflection on practices has to come to terms with the theoretical models and related assessment criteria. At the same time, theoretical models have to be tested by what emerges from the practice. The theory-practice, reflection-action circuit, so dear to pedagogical tradition from Dewey onwards, is still a key epistemological means to develop practices oriented towards the creation of awareness and knowledge, and for a theory that is able to satisfy the needs and expectations of practitioners. Apart from being productive on the heuristic level, this approach is also productive – as everybody knows - on the training level: the practitioner who reflects on his action explaining views, expectations and action plans is trained while he makes research and makes research while he is trained.

Research Context and Challenges

The research study here presented and carried out within the European project «On Air»[6], stems from the wide framework we have outlined above and constitutes an attempt at considering media educational practices as research objects, reflecting on pedagogical models and teaching instruments

[3] Jacquinot G., *op. cit.*, 2009, p.145.
[4] *Ibidem*, p.147.
[5] Schön D. A., *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, Basic Books, New York 1983; it. ed. *Il professionista riflessivo. Per una nuova epistemologia della pratica*, Dedalo, Bari 1993.
[6] The project was funded by the European Commission within the Life Long Learning Program 2008/2010. It was promoted by the Faculty of Communication of the University La Sapienza (Rome, Italy) and by the Italian Association of Media Education (MED). Other partners were: INFOREF (Belgium), Zinev Art Technologies (Bulgaria), Pixel (Italy), Easy Technology (Italy), Kaunas University of Technology (Lithuania), WSinf (Poland), ActiveWatch-Media Monitoring Agency (Romania).

used in the field of ME, and defining tools for the documentation and assessment of practices. At the same time, we aimed to develop and test learning tools and activities for ME.

These are ambitious goals, which have been pursued in a complex context. The research study was, in fact, carried out in six European countries, Belgium, Bulgaria, Italy, Lithuania, Poland and Romania all characterized by different traditions and experiences in the ME field.

The first issue regarded conceptual definitions: how to define the concept of media competence? How are the meaning areas of this concept represented? We submitted and shared a conceptual model elaborated in other studies by MED researchers[7] and structured in four main areas that are functional for the development of active citizenship: reader, writer, user, critical thinker (media citizenship still has a long way to go).

The definition we adopted is based on this model. It is, however, necessary to agree on the value and meaning we give to the concept of definition. A definition, first of all, accomplishes a conventional function: it allows people to agree on the meaning of words and consequently to understand each other. A definition also has the function of making people «think things through». A definition, however, is not eternal. In the history of ideas, all concepts have undergone semantic transformations, some of which are quite significant. Just think of the very concept of communication. As everybody knows, the original meaning of this term is to make common to many, to share, to let somebody share in something (from Latin communis = which belongs to everybody), but today's use of the term «communication» has, at least in part, departed from its original meaning. Let's consider, for example, mass media, which are called means of communication, and yet they are the emblem of impersonality, and so the opposite of «sharing, letting somebody share in something»[8].

So, the definition of media competence adopted in this study does not claim to be complete and is open to any future enhancement and development.

A second issue regarded the diversity of national experiences. When it came to collecting media education teaching practices in the single countries, in some realities it was harder to identify relevant practices, projects and experiences than in others, because of a more recent tradition in the ME field.

Finally, a third issue was the need to balance flexibility and rigour. Both in the planning and experimental phases of the ME programmes, working tools inspired by a common theoretical and methodological framework, but adapted to the local needs and contexts, were prepared and shared. In

[7] Ceretti et. al, *op. cit.*, 2006.
[8] Morcellini M., Fatelli G., *Le scienze della comunicazione. Modelli e percorsi disciplinari*, NIS, Roma 1994.

other words, we tried to define a common implementation protocol with the aim of restricting, so to speak, the research areas and the possible tools of intervention and, at the same time, giving partners the possibility to re-elaborate and reinterpret the shared tools.

Research Structure

The overall study was divided into two main research areas, one focusing on sociological aspects and dimensions and the other on pedagogical issues and practices. Here we shall focus on the educational side of the research, while referring to other works for sociological analyzes[9].

The pedagogical research was articulated into three main phases, i.e. (1) Analysis of case studies; (2) Designing and developing ME teaching materials and modules; and (3) Testing ME teaching materials and practices.

1. Analysis of case studies

This first phase of the research consisted of identifying, collecting and documenting ME practices and experiences carried out in the national contexts of the countries involved in the project. The purpose was twofold: on one hand, analyzing all the collected practices to discover possible trends in ME practices with a focus on media skills/competences and pedagogical issues; on the other hand, the aim was to valorise teachers' work, by selecting and disseminating significant ME experiences carried out in schools.

Obviously, each of the above objectives led to the definition of appropriate methods and procedures and to the development of specific working tools which will be explained in details later in the book.

The activity was carried out from June 2009 to February 2010, and was coordinated by Italian Association of Media Education (MED) with the contributions of all the partners.

The research process involved the following steps:

- Start up: creation of working tools and contacts with the schools;
- Findings and Descriptions: collection of ME practices and experiences and publication on the On Air portal;
- Evaluation and Dissemination: organization of two national workshops in each country and evaluation of the collected practices;
- Analysis and Elaboration: systematically coding of the collected

[9] Cf. *Transnational Research on Media Education*, edited by the research team of the Faculty of Communication of the University La Sapienza (Rome, Italy) with the support of all the partners. The document is available on the following URL: http://www.onair.medmediaeducation.it/userfiles/European_research_on_Media_Education.pdf; and also Cortoni I., *Young Digizen? New cultural challenges in media education*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2010.

practices and statistical analysis of the data and information obtained in relation to four main perspectives: national contexts, media skills/competences areas, media used, and pedagogical issues.

MED provided guidelines and forms to be used during the research and carried out the final analysis of all the collected practices. Each partner had to collect about 50 ME practices, grounding on a common format available on the On Air web portal. At the end of this activity, 309 experiences were published online, 161 of which analytically described and 148 shortly presented.

A key instrument for practices' description and documentation was the «Case Study Form», which is a comprehensive tool asking for specification on various areas such as: title, abstract, topic, media skills' areas, and media used, teaching methods, evaluation strategies, results, challenges, transferability, future development, and context of the experience.

The collected practices were submitted to an encoding procedure and then statistically analysed to discover the main ME practices' trends and issues in the six European countries involved in project.

Furthermore, as already stated, each partner organized two national workshops, involving expert teachers and educators, with the purpose of discussing and evaluating the practices collected on the basis of a set of common criteria. Through this procedure a more qualitative analysis of the practices was carried out and their strong and weak points were highlighted.

2. Designing and developing ME teaching materials and modules

The purpose of this phase was to plan and develop eight ME modules regarding four media competence areas[10]: (1) reading the media: the ability to read media and decode media languages; (2) write the media: the capacity of producing the media text and to use digital instruments for creative purposes; (3) critical understanding and evaluating the media: entails the complex attitude to observe media contents and objects with a distance; (4) media consumption awareness: the capacity of creating awareness as to choices in the consumption of media understanding their explicit and implicit messages in different situations.

The activity of developing teaching materials took place from June 2009 to February 2010 and again was coordinated by MED with partners' support.

The research process involved the following steps:

- Start up: brainstorming among partners on possible topics to develop and involvement of teachers and schools in the research;

[10] Ceretti et al., *op. cit.*, 2006.

- Planning: planning of the educational materials;
- Development: implementation of the teaching materials;
- Reviewing and evaluation: partners' mutual reviewing and evaluation of planned and developed products through a web forum;
- Revision: products' revision on the basis of partners' feedback.

MED developed the guidelines and forms to support the activity, and also produced a final summary report. Every partner contributed through planning and creation of ME materials. While each partner focused on a specific media competence area, the single educational material could also refer to other media competences in a transversal way.

The choice of topics for addressing was partially influenced by the emerging results of the practices that were under analysis and examination.

At the end of the design and development phase, eight educational modules were implemented and uploaded on the project's web portal[11].

3. Testing ME teaching materials and practices

The last research phase focused on the experimentation of the eight ME modules with two purposes: first, we wanted to define and try a common testing protocol, possibly re-usable or transferable to other contexts; second, we wanted to test the effectiveness and the quality of educational processes promoted with the ME modules.

These surely were ambitious purposes, particularly considering that, as previously noticed, the testing activity was carried out in a multicultural context, which required a long process of sharing meanings, imposed a flexible attitude, and required a work on the base of open and easily re-defined schemes. At the same time, as we were speaking of «testing», «validity», «effectiveness», and «quality», some keywords of educational research came out, demanding to a clear and rigorous explanation of purposes, theoretical-methodological arguments, procedures and work tools.

In this way, trying to conciliate flexibility and strictness, variety (in terms of involved points of view and situations) and uniformity (in terms of common research protocols), we set up an heuristic methodology that focused on ideas which belong to research-action traditions, trying at the same time to grow the inter-subjectivity of procedures through the spur of dialogical exchanges, documentative practices, and peer reviewing activities in a common and fixed framework.

The activity, still coordinated by MED, took place from March 2010 to July 2010. All the partners collaborated in the process.

[11] Cf. http://www.onair.medmediaeducation.it.

The activities planned for this phase was structured as follows:

- Definition and sharing of a testing protocol: in this first phase, partners discussed and shared the global research plan, its purposes, methods, procedures, and tools. MED suggested the use of some tools, that were adopted by partners and adapted to their specific contexts;
- Testing of ME modules: the eight ME modules were tested in the countries involved in the project; researchers and teachers took part at the test; the number of people involved in the project varied from one country to another, in a range that went from a minimum of 15/20 to a maximum of 50 students;
- Peer reviewing: the whole process was constantly attended by peer reviewing activities, conducted by participant researchers and also some teachers; peer reviewing activities were carried out through a web forum or videoconferencing. The aims of the meetings were: (1) to take stock of the situation, presenting the state of the works; (2) to analyze critical points and to evaluate possible solutions; (3) to underline positive elements and to evaluate the possibility to exploit them in other situations; (4) to examine and adapt purposes, methods, and procedures, based on emerging needs, but in a common framework; (5) to know students' point of view about the ongoing experience; (6) to know teachers' point of view about the ongoing experience; (7) to learn about the point of view of other actors involved in the experience; (8) to examine the products created by students; (9) to analyze and compare results achieved in the different national contexts;
- Summary of results and dissemination: the activities concluded with a summary report on the results emerged at national level.

This book

This book presents and discusses the research products and results of the pedagogical study carried out within the On Air project. It is structured in two parts, one dedicated to the overall theoretical framework of the study and the other focusing on its main results in terms of findings and products.

Chapter 1, titled *In Search of a Definition of Media Competence*, introduces the topic of media competence trying to define this complex notion and providing a common ground for the overall research.

Chapter 2, titled *Developing and Assessing Media Competence*, focuses on principles to design ME courses and elaborate methods and tools to evaluate media competences. These principles inspired the planning and developing of the eight ME modules created in the project. The chapter is completed by a box containing a short presentation of the eight modules.

Chapter 3, titled *Research on Media Education. Issues, Models and Tools*, deals with research issues and approaches, and attempts to outline a

framework to undertake research activities in ME. Special focus is placed on the increasingly popular concept of «good practice», which is interpreted as a fruitful theoretical notion for the development of professional knowledge, provided that clear and well founded validation procedures were defined.

Chapter 4, titled *Media Education Practices. Emerging Trends and Issues*, presents and summarizes the main results emerged from the quantitative analysis of ME practices. Methods and procedures are explained and findings described and analyzed. Some early conclusions are drawn with the awareness that further work will be needed in the future to fully exploit the informative potential of all the collected practices.

Chapter 5, titled *The Practice of Media Education. Topics, Issues and Examples of «Good Practices»*, adds further insight on ME practices. Starting with the analysis of five main ME topics, it focuses on «good practices» dealing with these five topics and resulted from practices' evaluation carried out within the On Air project.

Chapter 6, titled *«To be or not to be…digital teens?». A Study on the Development of Critical Thinking Skills of Adolescents*, gets to the heart of the research on the ME modules and present the findings of the testing of one of the module focused on critical thinking skills and Internet information credibility. After the introduction of the rationale which motivated the work, the chapter analyzes the testing results ending with the conclusion that, despite the emphasis on digital natives, students are not born, but rather become Internet users.

Chapter 7, titled *«My You Tube» between Consumption Awareness and Online Identity Building*, still focuses on findings related to the testing of the ME modules. In particular, it concerns a ME activity aimed at developing students' awareness on media consumption. Through an activity centred on You Tube students gradually discover their personal media preferences and develop more sophisticated competences of media fruition.

Chapter 8, titled *Open Digital Resources for Media Education. The Web Portal of the On Air Project*, winds up the book by providing an overview on all the online products created within the project and now freely available online. The Open Educational Resource philosophy inspired this final choice of publishing all the project contents in an open mode to promote knowledge sharing and support democratizing approaches to knowledge building and research processes.

Note

This book was jointly conceived by Alberto Parola and Maria Ranieri, however Alberto Parola wrote Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 (sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.3), and Boxes n. 1 and n. 3, while Maria Ranieri wrote part of Chapter 3 (sections 1, 5, 5.1 and 5.2), Chapter 4, Chapter 6 and Box 2. Both authors jointly wrote the Introduction and the Conclusion.

Other authors contributed in the book. In particular, Roberto Trinchero wrote Chapter 2, Isabella Bruni Chapter 5, Beate Weyland and Paolo Carboni Chapter 7, and finally Alessia Rosa Chapter 8.

Tables in Chapters 5 were created by Maria Ranieri with the much appreciated support of Isabella Bruni and Alessia Rosa.

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Mario Morcelli was the Scientific Director and Alberto Parola was the creator of the project.

Alberto Parola and Maria Ranieri coordinated the pedagogical research carried out within On Air, and Ida Cortoni the sociological research.
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Part one

Theoretical Framework

A. Parola

Chapter 1
In Search of a Definition of Media Competence

1. Introduction

In the contemporary debate about media and youth, and the place of Media Education (ME) in the curriculum the concept of media literacy or media competence has a key role[1]. Defining the conceptual content of this competence represents a preliminary and necessary condition to plan adequate teaching activities and educational materials for the development of knowledge, skills, and awareness toward the media.

Before going into the possible meanings of this concept, we would like to focus on terminology.

The term «media competence» is used in the international scientific lexicon: in Italian it is «competenza mediale», in French it is «compétence médiatique», in German it is «medienkompetenz», in Spanish it is «competencias en medios»[2]. In Anglo-Saxon countries, expressions such as «media literacy» and «media literacy education» are more frequently used[3].

At the same time, other keywords are now used in this domain: information literacy, digital literacy/competence, digital and media literacy, information and media literacy and so on.

[1] Cappello G., Ranieri M., *Digital and Media Literacy. Current Issues and Future Perspectives*, «Form@re», 70, September 2010, http://formare.erickson.it/wordpress/en/category/2010/n-70-settembre.

[2] Trinchero R., *Valutare la competenza mediale*, in A. Parola (Ed.), *Territori mediaeducativi*, Erickson, Trento 2008, pp. 327-337

[3] Felini D., *Pedagogia dei media. Questioni, percorsi e sviluppi*, La Scuola, Brescia 2004.

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It is beyond the scope of this chapter to 'harness' once and for all, within stable and definitive categories, the debate about the meanings and boundaries of an education about media. However, we would specify three main issues concerning the terms which are currently used in this field.

First, we opted to use the term «competence» rather than «literacy». On the one hand, the choice was dictated by contingent reasons. The word «literacy» can hardly be translated into languages such as Italian or French: the terms «alfabetizzazione» or «alphabétisation», which usually are used to translate «literacy» actually indicate something slightly different. In particular, they refer to the activity through which a person is introduced to writing and reading rather than the ability to read and write[4].

Second, the concept of competence, as it will be detailed later in the chapter, entails a more complex meaning than the traditional concept of «literacy» by referring to a 'meta-capability' rather than a capability. We can say that the competence is the subject's ability to mobilize a variety of resources to address and solve problems in new and unknown situations.

It should be put forward that even the concept of literacy, and therefore the notion of media literacy, in recent years has expanded and semantically enriched. As Hobbs states:

> When people think of the term «literacy», what generally springs to mind is reading and writing, speaking and listening. These are indeed foundational elements of literacy. But because today people use so many different types of expression and communication in daily life, the concept of literacy is beginning to be defined as the ability to share meaning through symbol systems in order to fully participate in society[5].

The idea of a «socially situated performativity» implicit in this expanded sense of literacy, put closer the traditional concept of literacy to the one of competence.

The term competence seems to have thus the double advantage of including ideas now implied in the term «literacy», and to facilitate translation into languages other than English.

Third, in this work, while preferring the term «media competence», we share the idea of Hobbs, when, referring to the plethora of terms now in use to refer to knowledge and skills related to the media, Hobbs observes:

[4] As an example see the definition of the term «alfabetizzazione» provided by *The dictionary of the Italian language* (*Il dizionario della lingua italiana*) by G. Devoto and G. C. Oli: «The delivery to the illiterate people of knowledge sufficient to make it able to read and write» (Le Monnier, Firenze 1990, p. 54). Compare now this definition with the definition of the term «literacy» provided by *The Oxford Dictionary of Education* by S. Wallace: «The ability to read and to write at a standard appropriate both to the individual's needs and to society's expectations» (Oxford University Press Inc., New York 2009, p. 166).

[5] Hobbs R., *Digital and Media Literacy: A Plan of Action*, The Aspen Institute, Washington, D.C. 2010a, p. 16.

> Each term is associated with a particular body of scholarship, practice and intellectual heritage, with some ideas stretching back to the middle of the 20th century and other ideas emerging in the past couple of years. These terms reflect both the disciplinary backgrounds of the stakeholders and the wide scope of the knowledge and skills involved. These concepts must not be treated as competitors. Referencing philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of family resemblance, one scholar identifies the shared heritage among these new literacies and argues, "The boundaries between the various members of this family overlap, but they should be seen as a closely-knit family" (Horton, 2007, p. 15, quoted in Hobbs, 2010a)[6].

Finally, although there is no single definition of media competence, we believe that thinking about a definition will help to clarify concepts and assumptions that are often implicit. In particular, on the educational level we need a comprehensive definition allowing to better focus on the (educational) objectives to be pursued, while allowing to define criteria to assess whether these objectives have been met. Our purpose of finding a definition, which is the main aim of this first chapter, must be interpreted in that sense, even if we are aware that any definition is always the result of a partly arbitrary and certainly evolving choice.

In the following sections, after focusing on the concepts of competence and media literacy/competence, we will introduce a conceptual model of «media competence», which based our research.

2. The concept of competence

We start our analysis by considering the notion of competence, which has been extensively discussed in the literature[7]. Scholars have defined competence in many different ways stressing different components. One very popular definition is the one made by Le Boterf[8]. According to the French scholar competence is not a status, but a process consisting of a mobilization of resources (subject knowledge, procedural knowledge, skills, practical and cognitive capacities, attitudes and dispositions) rather than of the resources themselves. Competence is a higher level attribute in comparison to other individual traits and moreover, indicates the «knowing how to act» in a situation or in a context, with the purpose to achieve a performance on which others will have to pass judgement. This implies that a person can be defined competent in a domain not because of his/her knowledge or skill but for his/her ability «to act efficiently in a

[6] *Ibidem*, p. 17.
[7] Scallon G., *L'évaluation des apprentissages dans une approche par compétences*, De Boeck, Bruxelles 2004.
[8] Le Boterf G., *De la competence: essay sur un attracteur étrange*, Les Editions d'Organisation, Paris 1994, pp. 16-18.

situation». In other words, the competent person, when facing a certain situation or problem, is able to understand it in the best way and to make the best decisions to solve the problem, or to change his/her strategy if it is not working.

As suggested by Trinchero[9], four components define the competence level of a person. The first element is determined by the amount and the quality of the resources held, consisting of knowledge and capabilities in a field, and by their appropriateness to solve the problem.

The second element includes the explicit and implicit models that allow to understand the problem, and then to select the appropriate strategies for addressing such a problem.

The third element is concerned with the operational strategies enacted by a person to reach a predefined objective within a specific situation and/or problem.

The fourth factor is the capability of a person to assess whether the adopted strategies are the most effective for the specific purposes or whether they should be modified. Self-reflection and self-regulation involve the capabilities of a person to learn from previous experiences of daily life.

In conclusion, the «competence» implies the ability to manage knowledge and techniques, knowing how to integrate them and put into work, knowing how to mobilize personal resources by making use of meta-cognitive adjustments and orchestrating a complex set of cognitive acts[10].

Moreover, the «competence» derives from a complex organization of cognitive resources in a functional system, also taking into account the emotional, social and sensory components: it can be represented as a 'multifaceted object' (consisting not only of knowledge and skills, but the interweaving of the both facets) that includes various elements such as identity, motivations, contextual knowledge, personal experiences, the experience of other people, relations with the world and with common sense[11].

[9] Trinchero R., *op. cit.*, in A. Parola, 2008.
[10] Coggi C., Notti A. (Eds.), *Docimologia*, Pensa Multimedia, Lecce 2002.
[11] Paparella N., *Media Education. Un portfolio di nuove competenze. Verso nuovi modelli pedagogici*, in T. Grande Sergi, M. G. Onorati (Eds.), *La sfida della comunicazione all'educazione*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2006, pp. 34-48.

3. Media competence and media literacy. An overview

We now discuss the definitions of the following terms: «media literacy» and «media competence».

The concept of media competence has been defined in its main aspects by Baacke[12], who combined the Habermas' concept of communicative competence and Chomsly's one of linguistic competence[13]. According to Baacke media competence is the basic competence of human kind. It consists of the capacity of using different types of media as communication tools and the activity of understanding the world. He identified four aspects of media competence:

(1) *critics of media* (Medienkritik): indicates the capacity of analyzing complex social processes, applying such analytical knowledge to his/her own acts, and harmonizing all those elements in a socially responsible way. This dimension recalls that of building interpretative models of situations which guide the subject's actions, and are typical of the application of a competence;

(2) *knowledge of the media* (Medienkunde): is the knowledge over the media and the systems connected to them, and also includes the capacity of using instruments and products. This element is close to the idea of the resources that a person is able to mobilize when 'acting' a competence;

(3) *the use of media* (Mediennutzung): pertains to the capacity of a receptive use of media (i. e., media consumption) and the capacity of interactive and constructive use of media (i.e., media production). This aspect is close to the operational strategies that a «media-competent» person enacts to reach specific objectives;

(4) *organization of the media* (Mediengestaltung): refers to the developments and the innovations of media systems, and to the forms of organization and creative/aesthetic production.

The term «media literacy» had begun to circulate in the 1970s, particularly in the United States, as part of the television literacy programs within the university curriculum[14]. Today it is widely common in the European lexicon, although there is still no unique definition[15].

As a first approach, we can say that media literacy refers to the knowledge, skills and behaviour, which enable one to know how to «read» and «write» the media, and to make active and aware use of them. It differs

[12] Baacke D., *Medienkompetenz. Begrifflichkeit und sozialer Wandel*, in A. von Rein (Ed.), *Medienkompetenz als Schlüsselbegriff*, Bad Heilbrunn 1996, pp. 112-124.
[13] Parola A., Trinchero R., *Come valutare i percorsi di Media Education*, in F. Ceretti et al., *op. cit.* 2006.
[14] Buckingham D., *Media education. Literacy, learning and contemporary culture*, Polity Press-Blackwell Publishing, London 2003.
[15] Celot P., Tornero J. M. P., *Media Literacy in Europa. Leggere, scrivere e partecipare nell'era mediatica*, Eurilink, Eurispes, Roma 2008.

from ME in so far as ME indicates the educational process, which takes place inside and outside formal educational institutional settings, through which media literacy is developed. Media literacy, in this view, would therefore be the result of ME[16].

Celot and Tornero[17], grounded on well known and consolidated categories, classified the skills and the capacities of media literacy in four main types: access, analysis and evaluation, creative communication and production. In detail:

(1) *access*: regards the possible effective use of media, including both the physical access to the contents and the capacity of using media in an adequate way. This may be summarized through the expression «conditions of access». These conditions are not the same for everyone, but change with age, place, background, and culture;

(2) *analysis*: is the capability of reading and understanding the media contents and the opportunity offered by media. Being able to read media involves the capacity of decoding a message on the basis of a concrete code and in a specific communicative situation, and understanding media means to be able to create a relation between the meaning and a specific context;

(3) *evaluation*: is the capacity of classifying media contents and media opportunities/constrains on the basis of a scale of values; it includes judgements about the value and the meaningfulness of a message; it involves the identification of ethical, aesthetical and cultural values behind the message and the comparison between them and the values of the judging subject;

(4) *communication and creative production*: this area includes the capacities needed to create a message using different types of codes (from the text to the audio visual, to the digital), and to disseminate it. Other skills connected to this area are: to understand the characteristic of the audience being addressed, to modify the message in order to catch the attention of the audience; to know how to connect ideas to be effective and appealing.

In a subsequent study commissioned by the European Union on building tools and indicators for assessing media literacy, Celot and Tornero[18] have proposed a distinction between two main dimensions for media literacy, i. e. the personal skills and environmental factors. The first category includes the personal skills to access, use and understand media, and a range of more social skills related to communication and participation. The second category includes contextual factors (i. e., the availability of the media or

[16] Jacquinot G., *De quelques repérages pour la recherche en education aux médias*, in P. Verniers (Ed.), *EuroMeduc. L'éducation aux médias en Europe. Controverses, défis et perspectives*, EuroMeduc, Bruxelles 2009, pp. 143-151; Celot P., Tornero J. M. P., *op. cit*., 2008; Buckingham D., *op. cit*., 2003.

[17] Celot P., Tornero J. M. P., *op. cit*., 2008.

[18] Celot P., Tornero J. M. P., *Study on Assessment Criteria for Media Literacy Levels. Final Report*, Bruxelles 2009.

the policies for media literacy) that have an impact on individuals and the rights of citizenship.

Another relevant reference is made by Hobbs. The American scholar speaks of «digital and media literacy» and defines it as the ability to:

> [...] (1) make responsible choices and access information by locating and sharing materials and comprehending information and ideas, (2) analyze messages in a variety of forms by identifying the author, purpose and point of view and evaluating the quality and credibility of the content, (3) create content in a variety of forms for authentic purposes, making use of language, images, sound, and new digital tools and technologies, (4) reflect on one's own conduct and communication behavior by applying social responsibility and ethical principles, and (5) take social action by working individually and collaboratively to share knowledge and solve problems in the family, workplace, and community, and participating as a member of a community[19].

The above definition retrieves the traditional pattern, divided into access, analysis, evaluation and production, and integrates it with reflection and action. It also highlights the conceptual links between media and digital literacy, on the one hand, and ethical, civic and social dimensions, on the other.

Hobbs's definition presents some similarities with the model of digital competence developed by Calvani et al., which identified three main dimensions to this competence (technological, cognitive and ethical) and defined it as the ability to:

> [...] being able to explore and face new technological situations in a flexible way, to analyze, select and critically evaluate data and information, to exploit technological potentials in order to represent and solve problems and build shared and collaborative knowledge, while fostering awareness of one's own personal responsibilities and the respect of reciprocal rights/obligations[20].

4. The MED Media Competence Model

Beyond terminology and diversity in accents, the various definitions share some common instances: (1) multidimensionality of the constructs: knowledge, skills and capabilities required today to deal with the media

[19] See Hobbs R., *op. cit*., 2010a, and Hobbs R., *Empowerment and protection: Complementary strategies for digital and media literacy in the United States*, «Form@re», 70, September 2010b, http://formare.erickson.it/wordpress/en/.

[20] Calvani et al., *Assessing Digital Competence in Secondary Education. Issues, Models and Instruments*, in M. Leaning (Ed.), *Issues in Information and Media Literacy: Education, Practice and Pedagogy*, Informing Science Press, Santa Rosa (CA) 2009, p. 161. See also: Calvani et al., *La competenza digitale nella scuola. Modelli e strumenti per svilupparla e valutarla*, Erickson, Trento 2010.

are different and multiple, (2) attention to the critical-evaluative dimension: the problem of the reliability and credibility of information in the Internet raises the urgent need for education and critical use of the media, (3) emphasis on ethics and participation: the new digital media can enable new forms of participation and civic engagement, conceived as affordances rather than causal determinations.

These instances are widely reflected in the conceptual model of media competence developed by MED researchers few years ago[21] and that was the starting point of the project On Air, and of the results presented in this volume.

How can we characterize this model? Considering that the competence can be seen as one of the 'ways of working' of the subject (see section 2), the individual who develops media competence must be able to act in many different ways, i.e. he has to:

(1) *know how to read media*: is the capability of reading and decoding media. The linguistic structure of media messages, their 'opacity' require, from the side of the individual, the capacity of understanding media grammar, and from a learning point of view, the gradual activation of a literacy process to fully understand the contents of the media texts;

(2) *know how to write media*: is the capacity of producing the media text and to use digital instruments with creative/productive purposes. Let's think about the capacity of «writing a media»: language is not objectively given, but it comes from a set of different abstract rules that have to be taught. Therefore it is not only laborious to understand it, but also complex to use it: the creation of a script, the plot, the details are together elements that influence one another until they form a unique final product[22]. The capacity of media writing is increasingly a new frontier for human expression, which has to be promoted among young people. On the educational side it is important to focus the attention on the conceptual implications involved by writing with the media, and to promote students' reflection on the communicative intentions and on the best tools to create effective messages;

(3) *know how to critically evaluate media*: we may define it as a complex attitude consisting in trying to take a distance from the observed object. The critical thinker has to be creative in the use of media, by mastering the

[21] Ceretti F., Felini D., Giannatelli R. (Eds.), *Primi passi nella media education*, Erikson, Trento 2006.

[22] The editing of a video can be considered as a real language, because like verbal language it is based on rules and conventions, and like non-verbal language it is characterized by the transmission of meta-communicative messages. This technique is extremely creative, because it tends to combine artificially two points of view to create a new one.

contents from an aware specific point of view and interacting appropriately with other people based on his/her past experience. The critical subject should be able to transfer his/her skills from one field to another, thus transferring creatively his/her knowledge in new contexts. With respect to the issue of critical autonomy, the communicative intentionality is now endowed with new tools and techniques, and is continuously solicited by them. Sending and receiving messages have become comfortable everyday actions that, at any time and any place, can be easily carried out, despite clarity and effectiveness. The relationship between communication and interaction, usually based on the presence of mutual contacts, now consists of relational processes in which distance and presence are no longer separate states. They indicate two different levels of a same existence where the body and the cognition system manifest or hide themselves, on the basis of the explicit intentions of the sender or the unconscious effects produced during the interaction. Critical thinking comes into play in different stages of the communicative act, from the understanding of the message to its creation, up to the understanding of the feedback. It is a dynamic and dialectical process, consisting of approaching and keeping a distance from the communication content, and it is supported by a combination of knowledge and skills;

(4) *know how to harness the media*: is related to the capacity of making aware decisions in the consumption of media (in given places and situations) and choosing between more or less explicit and ambiguous messages, and in different situations. The consumption is usually influenced by the (cognitive and emotional) needs of the subject and by personal motivation, or external stimulus. The notion of «choice» includes intentions and decisions, expectations and actions, for example behaviours such as visual fruition, self-management of programs (such as TV or radio schedule), understanding of characteristics of commercial products and so on.

Developing these capacities and knowledge means educating citizens, so as to enable them to live in a media and knowledge dominated society. In fact to be citizens today involves having adequate instruments to be connected with others in society (individuals and organizations) through the «mediation of media». In this perspective the capacity to understand how media creates and promotes strong social models and the development of media strategies to enhance social participation, are crucial[23]. As Jenkins et al. state:

[23] Cf. Jenkins et al., *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21° Century*, The John and Catherine MacArthur Foundation, Cambridge (MA) 2009; and James et al., *Young People, Ethics and New Digital Media. A Synthesis from the GoodPlay Project*, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Cambridge (MA) 2009.

> Participatory culture shifts the focus of literacy from one of individual expression to community involvement. The new literacies almost all involve social skills developed through collaboration and networking. These skills build on the foundation of traditional literacy, research skills, technical skills, and critical analysis skills taught in the classroom[24].

In summary, media competence includes not only critical understanding, but also a real capacity of critical autonomy and being able to act in front of the media. It is a kind of empowerment, of continuous and progressive emancipation which modifies the relationship between the media and the subject. The «media competent» citizen not only is a mature user, aware and able to interpret the message, but is also able to use the media in their own environment to create message and collaborate with others.

5. Conclusion

We conclude with a few brief observations on the relationship between the school and development of media competences.

As we have seen above, Le Boterf understands competences as a constructive process resulting from a combination of resources, skills, motivations, and also representations, beliefs, values and interests in a given context. In school, even considering the European recommendations[25], students' performances are related not only to education and sharing of common values, but also to tasks concerning social inclusion, employability, lifelong learning, and skills for life. Therefore, meta-cognitive aspects and socio-emotional development, especially in ME, should continue to be the object of careful study, trying to stay on the path of change, working steadily on: cultural identity, self-awareness, recognizing the boundaries in communication, good social cohesion, and also a responsibility for the necessary processes of change in the lives of individuals, families, organizations and communities.

[24] Cf. Jenkins et al., *op. cit*., 2009, p. 4.

[25] See the *Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council, of 18 December 2006, on key competences for lifelong learning* [Official Journal L 394 of 30.12.2006]. The recommendation refers to eight key competences, i.e. (1) communication in the mother tongue, (2) communication in foreign languages, (3) mathematical competence and basic, competences in science and technology, (4) digital competence, (5) learning to learn, (6) social and civic competences, (7) sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, (8) cultural awareness and expression. Available on line: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/lifelong_learning/c11090_en.htm.

Box n. 1
The Four Phases of Media Education
Alberto Parola

Media Education is a field with a long history which brings together many traditions of research and studies. It has both different theories and cultural views due to its geographical, social, and cultural aspects[1].
Historically, three main phases can be identified in the history of this research field[2]. First, the period of «distinguishing and resisting», the second one of «media as popular art», lastly the «demystifying» phase. To those we may add another more recent phase, the one Buckingham[3] indicated as being the «preparatory phase». Let's see below in more detail.

The phase of «distinguishing and resistance»
The period between the 1930's and the 1950's is referred to as the «moral approach" by Masterman[4], which is a highly defensive approach and is still followed today by certain educators. In this period the media was seen on the one hand, as being gifted with unlimited power, however, one which represents a negative influence on young people. They are considered as being able to do this through false ideology and economical manipulation. On the other hand the media are perceived as being responsible for the cultural decline of society, because they bring superfluous contents and values instead of the highly valued parts of culture like literature. This idea of the media having an effect of making the culture poorer, lead to the schools feeling they had to protect the children from the media in order to provide a better form of education. This behaviour resulted in the resistance and rejection of educators towards media. If media and mass culture are a poor expression of culture, media should be ignored and school should teach a more sophisticated culture. In contrast, the media have the power to manipulate people by using low quality representations of culture, making it the duty of education to preserve the young people and teach them to resist the commercial and economical manipulation. With this view the media are seen as a cancer, and the cure is through media education.

The phase of media as popular art
From the sixties there is a decline of the previous approach. There begins to be less of a difference between interpretations of high and low levels of culture, and forms of popular culture like cinema start to have official recognition as being view as culturally relevant. There is a new approach that is called «movement of the media as a popular art» and a new generation of teachers start to show interest in the new forms of cultural expression, that were previously kept out of schools. The main change is with the development of cinema, which at the end of the fifties finally finds its cultural dignity. This change in attitudes towards cinema had a substantial effect on ME, which found its preferred place of research. This new approach did

[1] Felini D., *Pedagogia dei media. Questioni, percorsi e sviluppi*, La Scuola, Brescia 2004.
[2] Cf. Masterman L., *Teaching the Media*, Comedia, London 1985; Buckingham D., *Media education. Literacy, learning and contemporary culture*, Polity Press-Blackwell Publishing, London 2003.
[3] Buckingham D., *op. cit*., 2003.
[4] Masterman L., *op. cit*., 1985.

not cancel the defensive behaviour towards media. There still exists a notion of there being a split between high and low culture, making educators willing to teach the differences between movies of poor and good quality.

The demistifying phase

Starting from the seventies and moving into the eighties they begin to abandon the defensive approach and begin to have interest towards media, usually excluded from school like television and news. An extremely important part of this phase was the introduction of semiotics, theories on ideology, and studies on production and consumption. The largest improvement brought by semiotics was the introduction of the idea that media are not transparent representation of the world: media does not show reality but represent an interpretation of it.

In these years there was much interest in critical analysis and Marxism leading to an improvement of ME inserting ideological analysis in its courses. Lastly, in these years one important improvement was brought about by sociology of communication, the improvement is to put the centre of attention on the context in which media are produced and used: many studies were conducted on the ideas of media institutions, on the practice of the media profession, on the control of media, and the differentiating influences on the production of media and its meaning.

On the teaching side the main purpose is to demistify, i.e. to make young people understand that media are not transparent, that they need to clarify the contents, and uncover the content behind the dominant ideology.

In other words it is no longer relevant to distinguish, discern, and discriminate between ethically and formally good and poor contents, but rather the emphasis is to demystify and reveal the implicit ideological aspects of media.

The preparatory phase

From the nineties the defensive attitude was completely abandoned. This new phase is denominated by Buckingham[5] as the «preparatory phase», in which the ME presents itself as a tool for cultural empowerment and social emancipation. The English scholar explained these changes on the basis of three main causes. First of all, the idea that media bring low quality contents is no longer valid, because the media offers a wider platform, thanks to the development of the digital media. At the same time educators realized that the defensive attitude was not effective, because young people do not accept the critics of media they prefer. Lastly, there was change in the teachers generation which brought upon teachers who felt media is an important part of everyday life: if these people were to use defensive behaviour it would be considered false.

The gap between ME and young people has decreased: media are not perceived as dangerous and young people are no longer seen as passive users. The objective now is not to defend young people from media, but to prepare them to make smart decisions towards it: ME has the purpose of educating young people about how to make aware decisions. On one hand, the objective is to make young people develop their capacity of critically understanding the media taking into account the economical and social factors; on the other hand the aim is to improve young people's skills to write and produce media texts, to improve active participation and democratic forms of media production.

[5] Buckingham D., *op. cit*., 2003.

R. Trinchero

Chapter 2
Developing and Assessing Media Competence

1. Promoting media competence: some principles

Training people in the acquisition of media competence means working on people's skills, and at the same time working on the use of those skills in the world of media, suggesting interpretive models and action strategies, supporting people in building up and experimenting new interpretations and actions, and stimulating them to reflect systematically on their own interpretations and actions[1].

People who possess good thought structures will be able to efficiently transfer «what they know and what they are able to do» in the different and new situations they have to face with in daily life.

From the point of view of situated competence, the planning of Media Education (ME) courses implies defining the best conditions that will enable learners to integrate resources, and create effective structures of thinking.

Resources and structures are made largely by mental representations[2], and therefore cannot be transferred from the teacher to the learner. The teaching action must be focused on making the learner «build» good and always personal representations.

[1] For a definition of the concepts of competence and media competence see Ch. 1. Here we would like to recall that the notion of competence is more complex than that of skill. While a skill is a personal resource, competence entails a complex set of resources and skills to be mobilized into action.

[2] See Anderson J., *Cognitive Psychology and its Implications* (7th edn.), Worth, New York 2009.

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Teaching how to «act with competence in a situation» requires a different approach to that used in traditional instruction.
Some useful principals for the planning of the training might include[3]:
a. Creating courses considering that learning is a «non-linear» process

In the traditional logic of school planning knowledge is linear: students learn through instructional sequences, often rigid and predefined. In real life (outside the school), kids do not learn in this way. Knowledge of the phenomenon is acquired through the many ways and alternatives: life events of a singer/famous actor are known through different forms of media (TV, radio, newspaper, magazines, Internet, gossip, etc.). The typical problems of the real world (not the traditional school problems, i.e. the ones made to be answered by a sample structure) are not answered by a unique solution, but there are many different possibilities, each with one its pros and cons and an internal coherence with certain strategies of thinking and action. Therefore it seems obvious that a young person used to the complexity of media interaction, may see the traditional linear and transmissive mode of instruction completely far from the way of developing knowledge in real life. «Teaching the media» with a different approach from the style in which the students are used to learn with the media, seems to be an incoherent and inefficient strategy to use.
b. Creating courses considering that learning is an active and intentional process

It is fundamental in the learning that the learner chose to do it. For a learner, young or adult, it is much easier to confirm their own naïve «representations of the world» than make an effort to create alternative visions of the world, which are better founded. To overcome this «mental inactivity» students need to be motivated. The teacher must create an interest and invoke the will of the pupils, helping them to find good reasons to change, not only mental representations, but also their own attitudes toward school activities. «Teaching the media» starting from the media used by the students can be a way to motivate them and make them consider new aspects of the discipline.
c. Creating courses considering that learning is a constructive process

To learn is to build and rebuild all the time personal/mental representations of concrete and abstract entities of the world. The materials and situations that are proposed, are the starting points of the building up of these personal/mental representations. Day after day, children and young people build up their own representations based on a multiplicity of different stimuli, but we cannot presume that these representations are adequate nor that they are the best possible solutions. The teacher

[3] The principles here presented are based on constructivistic approaches to the design of learning environments. Cf. Jonassen D. H., *Thinking technology, toward a constructivistic design model*, «Educational Technology», 34, April 1994, pp. 34-37.

should make learners' representations emerge, by leading them in the reflection, and highlighting their incongruent and weak points, with the aim of developing students' capacity to create wider and well founded representations. «Naïve» representations often characterize the relation between young people and media, thus representing a good starting point for the teacher's work.

d. Creating courses considering that learning is a social process

There is not only the direct experience, but also the exchange of information with others involved in the learning process. Communicative interactions and exchanges can be considered real learning activities. The success of the teaching process depends on several social factors such as the active participation of all the students, the quality and the constancy of the interactions aimed at negotiating solutions, developing knowledge, exchanging experiences, co-planning solutions, and sharing aims, objectives, and processes. Teaching activity should promote the exchange of ideas and views, which in ME means promoting critical discussion on what the students find on TV, what type of music they listen to, and what video games they play.

e. Creating courses considering that learning is a reflexive process

Good representations cannot be built without being able to reflect on whether they are good or not. To pass from traditional instruction based on the simple «transmission of solutions», to a more complex approach «supporting the building of personal solutions» teaching needs to shift the focus on the development and improvement of students' ability to self-reflect on their own actions and to self-regulate their learning.

f. Creating courses considering that learning is a situated process

Each real world problem that students face within daily life can provide the opportunity to learn school contents, on condition that someone teaches students how to read reality, and face it using what was learned at school. Media provide an opportunity for young people to face with several different situations, that are not only relevant to learning about media, but also useful as a starting point to learn language, mathematics, science, history, geography, and everything else taught at school.

g. Learning does not end with school, but comes together with the life process

What is learned in everyday life should be brought to (and improved on) at school and what is learned at school should be brought to (and improved on) in everyday life. That means that the teacher should use the competences developed by the students outside the school (i.e., the use of computers, use of the Internet, photography, video games, etc.) to help them achieve school objectives. There is no gap between «the world of learning» and «the world of doing» because every situation can be a learning situation, especially in ME.

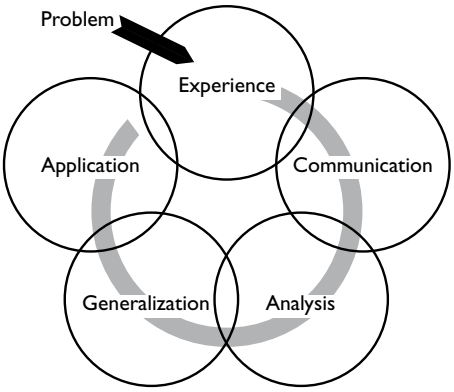
2. Designing teaching activities

The above design principles can be implemented by teachers and trainers in many different ways. We now introduce an instructional model to plan teaching activities based on the theory of experiential learning formulated by Pfeiffer and Jones[4] and summarised in Figure 1. The cycle of learning starts with a *Problem* which must be: a) open, which means that it involves different possible solutions, each one with both strong and weak points; b) significant to people who have to face with it, which implies that it should be challenging and generate satisfaction once solved; c) to be solved alone, in pairs, or in small groups, but always counting on interaction with classmates, and with the teacher, and the consultation of school materials.

Being engaged in problem solving activities leads the students to make an *Experience* inside a social context (e.g. the class or training group). Each student (each pair, or group leader) must then tell his/her experience (*Communication*, i.e. exposition of the experience orally and/or using visual aids) and, with the help of a teacher and the group, Analyze the strong and the weak points of his/her proposed solution to the problem. The teacher and the work group will then summarize the strong points of all the solutions proposed in order to produce one or more of the better solutions and, thus, understand the principles on which the best solution should be based (*Generalize*). The teacher will propose a situation in which those principles and solutions could be applied (*Application*) starting a new cycle of learning by experience, following a step by step approach.

To organize teaching activities in this way may present many advantages. First of all, the student develops an awareness that a problem can have multiple solutions, some better than others, and that his own interpretation is not necessarily the best solution. Secondly, students' attention is not on the solution of the problem (the product) but on the process that leads to the solution and on the general principles that can be extrapolated and applied to similar problems. The student thus learns that it is important to solve the problem, but it is much more important to be able to explain why we solve it in this way, extrapolate the general rules with which it is possible to answer problems belonging to the same genre and apply what has been learned to new situations, not contemplated in the concluded experience. Teaching activity structured in this makes students always face new problems, leading them to simultaneously develop knowledge and advanced thought processes to apply knowledge.

[4] Pfeiffer J. W., Jones J. E. (Eds.), *A Handbook of structured experiences for human relations training, 1-10*, University Associates, San Diego 1985; and Pfeiffer J. W., Ballew A., *Using Structured Experiences in Human Resource Development*, University Associates, San Diego 1988.



It is necessary to underline that the 5 moments of the learning process: a) do not constitute a fixed sequence, i.e. more phases can overlap one another; b) constitute a basic structure for the planning of learning activities in which alternately the experience phase and the reflective phase are completed. Figure 2 illustrates in details the different moments of the cycle.

Figure n. 1 – The experiential learning cycle by Pfeiffer & Jones[5]

	What the teacher does	What the students do
Experience	The teacher asks students to complete a task (the Problem). This can be: -watch a movie or a cartoon, listen to audio, interactive video games or websites, identify texts, signs, messages, rules, genres, narrative models (reading skills); -create a storyboard and also components of movies, cartoons, audio recordings, videogames, websites, through the production of messages, thus developing communicative intentions and creativity, which are typical features of an author (writing skills); -watch a movie or a cartoon, listen to audio recordings, interact with video games or websites, understand points of view and values, underline the perspective in which the text is written, identify the way the message represents the world, from an aesthetic, ethical, and cultural point of view (critical thinking skills); -analyze media consumption styles, including one's own style, focusing on strategies of consumption, on satisfied needs, and the motivation behind the choice of a specific media (user skills). During the activity the students can consult the teacher and their classmates, and can use informative material as short text (e.g. glossary or a summary), websites, encyclopaedia, and handbooks.	Carry out, individually, in pairs, or small groups, the tasks set by the teacher.

[5] Pfeiffer J. W., Jones, J. E. (Eds.), *op. cit.*, 1985.

Communication	The teacher invites each student (or group) to tell their own experiences.	The students tell their own experiences, presenting their products, explain the process that led them to that product (and not to others) and the 'good reasons' behind their choices («why they decided to use this method»).
	During the discussion the teacher tries to highlight the methodology applied by the students who developed the work, and the strategies adopted to solve the problem, trying to highlight the strong points of each product so as to avoid students quitting the tasks.	The students analyze classmates' products, comparing them with their own, and discussing them in groups, led by the teacher in order to: a) acquire awareness of the several ways to achieve outcomes; b) acquire awareness of their own methodology and strategy adopted.
Analysis	The teacher writes on the board or orally explains to the pupils the criteria to evaluate the product created at the teacher's request (the criteria can also be decided together with the class in a previous activity), or offers one or more «good» possible solutions not yet proposed.	Students evaluate their works on the basis of the identified criteria and, together with the teacher, find the strong and weak points.
	On the basis of the identified criteria and solutions the teacher asks, during the discussion, the students to find the strong points («what makes my solution good, explain»), and the weak points («in what way is my solution poor, explain») of the works made and list them in a matrix on the board. The list of weak points can constitute a group of «typical mistakes».	They recognize which elements of their work satisfy the criteria listed, or present in other students' good work. The students examine listed typical errors to see whether they are present in the work that they produced.
Generalization	On the basis of what emerges from the Analysis, the teacher asks students to define how to properly accomplish the request, and why this is considered a good method by the students. The good methods can be derived from a synthesis of the strong points written on the board, but also from the criteria, the examples of good solutions, and from the suggestions given by the teacher.	They highlighted the good methods on the basis of what was highlighted during the Analysis. During this phase they acquire awareness that a) not all the ways of answering a certain request have the same value; b) there are different ways to avoid typical mistakes.
	The teacher invites the students to find other situations in which it is possible to apply the good solutions that were found.	Students search for other situations, from their private lives, in which they can apply the good solutions.
Application	The teacher makes a new request in which the students have to show how to apply the good solutions found. The new request can be the simple application of the solution found (in this case the students must apply the best solution for a given problem), or a request for the enrichment of the solution with new elements of knowledge.	They answer the teacher's new request showing their new ability to apply the correct solution, and eventually the ability to improve it.
	This request creates a new phase of Experience, and a new cycle.	Doing so they start a new phase of their Experience.

Figure n.2 – An example of a teaching activity based on the Experiential Learning Cycles[6]

[6] *Ibidem.*

3. Assessment models and tools for ME

If media competence is not a simple addition of skills, but is a process in which people's resources are orchestrated to produce effective solutions to a given problem, then the evaluation must include: a) the available resources, in terms of knowledge, skills, personal and social abilities, and methods; b) the models through which individuals analyze problems (interpretation structures); c) the strategies to face problems (action structures); d) the way subjects reconsider their own interpretations and strategies (self-regulation structures).

These above-mentioned four aspects allow us to define the categories used to classify student performance levels, and identify competence profiles. The closer the student's results are to the level of competence of the novice or of the experts (i.e. the person most competent), the more or less developed the student's knowledge, as illustrated in Figure 3. In this example, the competence analyzed is that of «knowing how to consult the web as a source of information», and the proposed problem/situation is «Create a list of links of the application of the Cartesian diagrams in physics».

	Novice	**Expert**
Resources	Able to read and understanding a math's text addressed to students aged 14-15. Able to use Google.	Able to read and understanding a math's text addressed to students aged 14-15. Remember that Cartesian diagrams can be used to represent math models. Able to use Google.
Interpretation structures	Understands the task in a reductive way as «Let's search web pages where words like 'diagram', 'Cartesian' and 'physics' appear».	Reformulates the task as «Let's search web pages dealing with the building of math models in physics and evaluate their pertinence to the initial problem».
Action structures	Access Google and searches for the words «Cartesian diagram physics».	Access Google and searches for the words «Cartesian diagram» «math models» «physics». Skims through the founded web pages, identifies other key words to refine the research and repeat the search. Makes a classification of the web sites according to the relevance for the problem at stake.

Self-regulation structures	Even though the search activity results in frustrating outputs, the subject is not able to develop alternative understandings and strategies. He finishes with the conclusion that «a few materials are available online on the subject».	Quickly eliminates key words which do not work and focuses on fruitful words. Revise and improve web site selection criteria while discovering new useful sites.

Figure n. 3 – Examples of profiles of competence

It is possible to list many profiles of competence ranging from a maximum to a minimum: competence must not be considered as «all or nothing», but as an indivisible status (fig. 4). People with many skills may solve different types of problems, more or less difficult, but with a little interpretation wiggle room (closed problems), one solution solving strategies, and evaluation methods based on the difference between «right» and «wrong» actions. People with many competences are able to solve problems with many interpretations and solving strategies, each of them is not necessarily completely correct/wrong in their response, but there is a possibility of both strong and weak points in their responses.

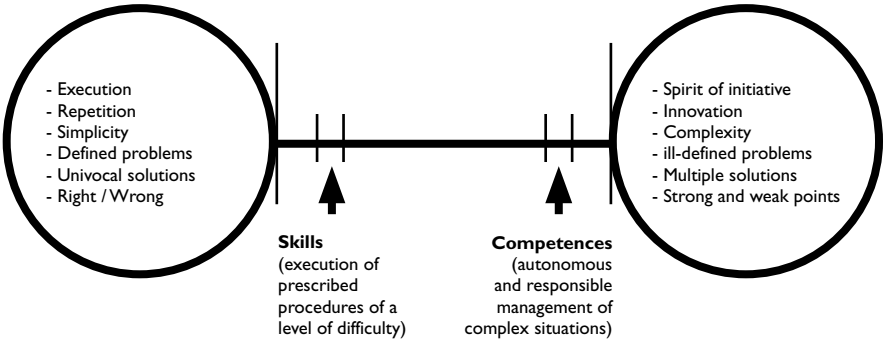


Figure 4 – The Cursor of Competence[7]

In the following sections we propose some examples of techniques and useful instruments to collect information on the four aspects. It is also important to underline that the competence is a concept that does not allow reductionism. Even if it is possible to collect information about single

[7] Adapted from Le Boterf G., *Construire les compétences individuelles et collectives*, Les Editions d'Organisation, Paris 2000.

aspects, the evaluation must consider the students' overall competence, that is how the skills of the four aspects (i.e. resources, interpretations structures, actions structures, self-regulation structures) interact between each other and create a structured and integrated ensemble of social, economic, theoretical, methodological, technical, self-reflecting knowledge. This ensemble, in specific contexts when faced with fixed problems, is the origin of knowing how to act in situations, which is the fundamental feature of a competence.

The evaluation test that we will propose below can be used both for formative evaluation (as an aid to support learning) and for summative evaluation (i.e. to formulate an evaluation judgment at the end of the course). In the perspective of formative evaluation, the test can start a new cycle of experiential learning based on experience, according to the model described in the above section.

3.1 Evaluating the resources

The evaluation of the resources acquired during the training course includes the gap between: a) prior knowledge and new course-learning; b) knowledge at the end of the course, and the knowledge the student should have obtained.

Possible techniques and instruments:

a) identify the key concepts inside a text or a speech (or from the evaluator's proposal) and provide a definition for them, through a short essay or a drawing;

b) identify the key concepts and link them to the text/context. It is possible for a student to create a conceptual map on a given topic before and after the training course. Students have to be previously taught how to create a conceptual map;

c) a simplified version of this type of test is developed by requesting learners to link items of correspondence between concepts, with an explanation for the proposed relation (fig. 5);

Connect the terms of the two lists below and explain why you have connected them:	
1. Director	Videocamera _____
2. Producer	Script_____
3. Actor	Sound track _____
4. Singer	Story _____
5. Operator	Publicity launch _____

Figure n. 5 – Finding connections

d) the time line. The students are asked to place on a timeline, draw on paper, the different moments, such as the production of a news report. The

evaluation is created by confronting the given answers with standard profile answers, each with a given rank or an evaluation assessment which describes how close they are to the «optimal» answer (expert competence profile).

3.2 Evaluating structures of interpretation

The evaluation here focuses on the gap between: a) the student's views before and after the training course; and b) the student's views after the training course and those of a fully competent person. Possible techniques and instruments:

a) media text analysis: a media text is given to the students, and they are asked to read it, analyze it, on the basis of the given criteria. For a better comparison, the analysis can take the form of sentences to complete (fig. 6);

After watching cartoon X, answer the following questions:
1. The protagonist is_____
2. The protagonist suffers because_____
3. The protagonist is helped by _____
4. The «good» men are_____
5. The «bad» men are _____
6. The moral of the story is that it shouldn't _____

Figure n. 6 – An example of a sheet for media text analysis

b) another possibility consists of asking respondents to find examples for certain categories, even multidimensional (fig. 7). It is also possible to use alternative versions based on value-judgments.

Provide, if possible, an example of a programme for each category			
	Italian	Japanese	American
Cartoons			
Telefilm			
Film			

Classify the characters of the three cartoons which you have seen by writing their names into the three boxes below:			
	Good	Bad	Indifferent
Spider Man			
Tom & Jerry			
Dragonball			

Figure n. 7 – Provide examples of objects belonging to these multidimensional categories

c) the most important moment: the student is asked to describe the experience of the training course as in a story, and is asked which is the most important moment for him/her, and why;

d) recognize the emotions: the student is asked to answer questions on «what they felt» during the reading of the media text (fig. 8);

After watching the cartoon X, answer the following questions:
1. I felt happy when _____ 2. I felt sad when _____ 3. I was surprised when _____ 4. I was afraid that _____

Figure n. 8– An example of grid to recognize emotions

e) role representation: the student is asked to represent the role of a professional in the world of media, that he/she met during the training course (fig. 9);

Who is a film director? Try to explain it through the description of what he does:
1. Decides_____ 2. Chooses _____ 3. Creates _____

Figure n. 9– An example of grid to represent roles

f) what is the message?: the student must complete items like the one in figure 10, identifying the messages inside the program;

We watched cartoon X. What do you think about the director's purposes? List below at most three sentences
1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Figure n. 10 – An example of item to identify messages

g) opinion profile: the student is asked to express several opinions on real world entities, structured in a grid (fig. 11), and to give reasons for opinions, and to defend them in a debate.

Think about TV advertisement. According to you:
1. What is its purpose? _____
2. Who produces it? _____
3. How much does it cost? _____
4. Is it truthful? _____
Remember that you will have to argue your opinions orally!

Figure n. 11– An example of grid to ask for opinions

The evaluation is made by confronting the given answers with the standard profile answers, with a given rank for each answer, describing how close they are to the optimal answer (expert competence profile).

3.3 Evaluating action structures

When evaluating action structures and the strategies used, the gap is considered between the capacities to carry out an action before and after the training course (e.g. the student's capacity to plan a hyper-media product or apply a narrative model to the analysis of the cartoon). However, we can presume that students are not at all able to carry out the requests before the training course, and then focus the evaluation at the end of the training course on how the students' action strategies are close to the strategies of a fully competent student. Following this approach, the evaluation can be based on the principles of performance assessment and the products can be evaluated on the basis of evaluation rubrics. Alternatively, it is possible to use items which ask to describe in detail, for example, a reading, production, or analysis process: «Describe what you would do in the planning of hyper-media products», «Apply this narrative model to that unfinished story, and guess an ending», «Build the ideal programme schedule», «Produce a message for a given target», «Highlight the point of view of the text». The evaluation is carried out describing how close they are to the optimal answer (expert).

3.4 Evaluating self-regulation structures

On this topic, the evaluation pertains to students' capability to reflect on their actions, for example on previous exercises or on required

performances, and to understand their errors and how they could have avoided them. Even here it is difficult to consider the difference between before and after, because the students did not ponder on their past actions before receiving the course. Three possible strategies:

1) clinical conversation, i.e. a long talk in which, thanks to well addressed questions, it is possible to understand how choices were made, and the reasoning behind them.

Some examples of questions are:

- Why the character you created is dressed in this way?
- Why does he behave like this? Is there another way he could act?
- Why did you choose this exact scene? etc.

2) peer assessment, e.g. in pairs, students are asked to exchange answers to the above questions, discussing them (finding their own and other mistakes and sharing possible solutions), and presenting the results to the teachers and classmates.

3) self-evaluation on the basis of a given task, e.g. writing the students' results on the blackboard and asking them to find their own mistakes, and why they consider their first answer to be wrong.

4. Creating and evaluating competences

We now see how a teacher or an educator can implement the planning principles explained above (section n. 2) in the areas of reading skills, writing skills, user skills, and critical thinking skills.

The following sections show general competence profiles for the above four areas. From this general level, different profiles can be derived which range from the maximum competence profiles (i.e., the highest performance expected from a student who is considered expert in that area), to the minimum performance profiles (i.e., the required performance from a student with a minimum competence in that area), and intermediate profiles representing different student levels of knowledge.

The learning objectives included in the profiles can be considered as a guide for the planning of teaching and evaluation activities, as explained in the previous sections. Some possible activities are suggested to develop knowledge, skills and capacities for each competence profile. The activities described below in the tables can be considered as good examples of problem-situations which enable the start of the cycle of the experiential learning from Experience to the subsequent phases.

4.1 Reading skills areas

Figure 12 provides a possible profile for a general competence in the field of media reader.

Resources	• Knowing the concepts of text, sign, code • Knowing the 'rules' of media world • Knowing the textual genres • Knowing technical and instrumental differences between a medium and the other media • Knowing the main elements of a narrative model
Interpretative Strategies	• Understanding the construction of media messages • Understanding that media rules are different from rules of reality • Knowing how to recognize the constituent parts of a media text • Knowing how to recognize the textual genres in the perspective of media • Knowing how to recognize the communicative purpose of the messages (inform, persuade, command, advise, entertain, etc.)
Action Structures	• Knowing how to apply a narrative model to a product • Knowing how to analyze the linguistic structure of a media product recognizing the textual elements
Self-regulation Structures	• Being able to reflect on their own readings of media products and to identify their mistakes, with the guide of a teacher

Figure n. 12 – Competence profile in the field of media reader

Activities to improve this competence profile can include:

- read a media text proposed by the teacher (book/e-book, photography, commercial, website, movie, cartoon, comic, song or video music, radio broadcast, television program, newspaper or magazine, videogame, phone application), and analyze it in all its parts, by finding texts, targets, notes, rules characterizing it, referring genre, possible cataloguing, techniques and tools used to produce it, and narrative elements inside it;
- examine newspapers and magazines to collect articles on a given topic (proposed by the teachers or chosen by the pupils), and write a *résumé* of max 20 lines on the information collected;
- review newspapers and magazines to collect pictures and photos on a given topic, and write a brief description for each;
- illustrate a given topic by choosing three photos taken from magazines and newspapers that in the students' opinion represent it best and most effectively;

- create a photo exhibition with pictures and descriptions to represent a given topic to people who do not know anything/much about it;
- describe the meaning of a photo, a commercial, an image, a video, a song or a radio broadcast;
- analyze an article, identify the main elements and describe them;
- put the characters of some cartoon series, movies, or TV shows on a timeline, and explain why you put them in this order.

4.2 Writing skills area

Figure 13 provides a possible profile for a general competence in the field of media writer.

Resources	• Knowing the concept of authorship • Knowing the concept of communicative intention • Knowing the elements of a communicative project
Interpretative Strategies	• Knowing how to recognize the constituent parts of a media product
Action Structures	• Knowing how to produce a message, in an appropriate manner, using the linguistic rules of the media, to achieve a communicative goal • Knowing how to build, in a technical way, a media product
Self-regulation Structures	• Being able to think about their own construction of media products and to identify their mistakes, guided by teachers

Figure n. 13 – Competence profile in the field of media writer

Activities to improve this competence profile can include:

- create a story using some photographs from which to start;
- flip through a magazine or a newspaper, cut out photos of characters, and build a story;
- begin with a topic, search for some pictures on the web and build a story using them;
- choose a topic of particular interest, and then create a blog related to it using a free platform. The blog should contain: pictures, sound, music, videos, and text;
- plan a brief radio broadcast (10-15 minutes), write a draft including dialogue, music, and sounds. Record it and play it in class, then comment on it together;
- create a TV show and describe it, specifying: the typology (cartoon, serials, etc.), which already existent programme it looks like, the environment and characters, and the plot;

- create a comic-strip on a given topic, specifying the dialogue script, and drawing the vignettes. Once ready, show it to classmates;
- plan a one-picture commercial (e.g. billboard, magazine, or commercial), draw it, and present it to classmates;
- with a camera, create an animated presentation such as, for example, a Photostory on a topic with a soundtrack;
- on a given topic or story, create a script, and using a camcorder produce a short video to represent it;
- plan and realize a PowerPoint presentation on a topic, using text and images;
- search the web for material on a topic. What facts are the best and most fitting? Which are the least interesting? Define together with your classmates the evaluation criteria, and then evaluate the material collected based on the afore-mentioned criteria.

4.3 User skills area

Figure 14 provides a possible profile for general competence in the field of media user.

Resources	• Know the possible strategies for media consumption • Know the possible needs and motivations that lead to exposure to a particular medium or media message
Interpretative Strategies	• Know how to recognize a selection strategy • Know how to recognize the strategies that the media adopt to capture attention and to direct media consumers • Know how to recognize the personal and familiar habits used by the media • Know how to recognize the reasons and the needs satisfaction mechanisms of a particular media consumption-group
Action Structures	• Be able to choose media consumption • Know how to manage leisure time in relation to the media
Self-regulation Structures	• Be able to think about own choose of media products and to identify their mistakes, with the guidance of a teacher

Figure n. 14 – Competence profile in the field of media user

Activities to improve this competence profile can include:

- write a daily diary in which you note media messages, their sources, and your emotions when you encounter them. For each message note: the time of reception, the source issuing it, the medium used, and the

message typology (e.g. commercial, information, entertainment, etc.); then, summarize the message in 2-3 lines;
- classify the messages collected in the diary during the activity described above on the basis of: the medium issuing them, the communicative function (to inform, convince, command, suggest, entertain, etc.), and the transmitters. Make a bar graph for each category and present it to classmates;
- create a grid in a notebook with a line for each transmitter, and a column for each communication function detected. At each line-column intersection, write the number of messages issued by the corresponding transmitter which have a certain function. Describe the graph to classmates;
- interview your relations (uncles, or elders) and ask them to describe a normal day when they were your age. Please focus on the medium used, the transmitters, the messages received, the typologies of messages, and the differences between «their world of media» and the modern one. Compare your normal day with theirs, and then describe the differences to your classmates;
- watch a cartoon or have a videogame session; and then describe your behaviour (what you did), and your emotions (what you felt) during the different episodes of the cartoon or videogame;
- create a compilation of your favourite cartoons of the week (or TV shows or videogames) and explain why you placed each one where you did.

4.4 Critical thinking skills area

Figure 15 provides a possible profile for general competence in the field of critical thinking in relation to media.

Resources	• Know concepts related to ethical dimension (background values, moral options, implicit or explicit ethical principles) • Know concepts related to the aesthetic dimension (stylistic traits of the author) • Know concepts related to the socio-cultural dimension (mental backgrounds, historical conceptions, philosophical viewpoint, world ideas, cultural perspectives)
Interpretative Strategies	• Know how to recognize implicit meanings of a message • Know how to recognize points of view and values underlying messages • Know how to recognize implicit backgrounds message • Know how to interpret underlying views of media text • Know how to recognize ethical traits of a media text • Know how to recognize stylistic features of a media text (common characters, contrast choices, etc.) • Know how to recognize socio-cultural traits of media text

Action Structures	• Know how to highlight the perspective inscribed in text • Know how to evaluate views and values of a message
Self-regulation Structures	• Be able to think about own critical thinking on media products and to identify their mistakes with guidance of a teacher

Figure n. 15 – Competence profile for critical thinking in relation to media

Activities to improve this competence profile can include:

- read a comic-strip with two characters. Tell the story from the point of view of the first character, and then from the point of view of the second character;
- search newspapers and magazines for information about a specific event, and form an opinion based on the facts. Share your opinion/ your reasoning with other groups, and defend it against any criticism. Consider as many facts as you can from both sides in your exposition; remember that your opinion will be judged on the basis of the number of facts you collect;
- on the basis of the single opinion made during the previous exercise, build the class opinion by summarizing everybody's opinion;
- watch a movie (or a cartoon, or read a comic or a story) and identify yourself with one of the characters (he must not be the main protagonist), then write the answer to the following questions: «Why has the protagonist acted like this?», «What would you have done in his place?», «Explain your reasons on the basis of what happened in the story»;
- listen to the same piece of news on different TV news broadcasts (or read it in different newspapers). Ask yourself: «What are the differences between them?», «What do they have in common?»,«Which is the explicit point of view?», «What is being said between the lines?». Write down your thoughts, and comment on them with your classmates;
- detect the representation of the real world, stereotypes, sub-culture, and external cultural references (e.g. Japanese, American, Latin) in a given movie, cartoon, video or photo, commercial, song, radio broadcast, or videogame;
- try to compare two different movies (or cartoons, etc.) as in the previous exercise;
- search the Internet for some real world institutions (e.g. Parliament, Police, etc.) and create your own representation of these on the basis of the virtual representations found. Describe this representation to your classmates.

Box n. 2

Teaching and learning about media. Examples from the On Air project

Maria Ranieri

Within the On Air project, eight ME educational modules were developed and tested. Each module focused on a specific component of media competence (i.e., reading skills, writing skills, user skills, critical thinking skills) or on a blend of different skills. Of course, when working on the development of competence, we were also working on soft-skills and abilities such as problem solving, creative thinking and so on. The notion of competence, as already seen (Ch. 1), is in fact a complex construct which requires the integration of different types of knowledge and resources.

Here we provide a short description of all the modules that have been developed[1].

«We publish a press kit» by INFOREF (Belgium)	
Reading skills	The project for the creation of a press kit integrates numerous skills: it develops media education, search, synthesis, critical mind, citizenship, etc. It allows users to broach some essential notions of the French course in a functional context: the creation of a plan, synthesis or summary, how to take notes, the acquisition of specific vocabulary (that of the media to be specific), and even the acquisition of some spelling rules (such as elision, use of capital letters, agreement of past participles, etc.) make sense here, it is directed towards the production of a written work that will really be read and published in the framework of the school's projects. Most of the methods set up in this module are focused on the learner: the teacher helps the students to build their learning on their own. It is a work in the framework of a project that involves the whole class. In small groups, the students' aim is to create a press kit and the whole activity of the term is directed towards this final aim, through diverse stages that combine individual work and cooperative learning. Cooperative learning: • The student regularly confronts his/her representations with those of his schoolmates (e.g.: I think information is ..., a press kit is ...) • In groups of 4, the students list the different kinds of texts in the press, find some articles that illustrate the main functions of the newspaper, search (the Internet and books) for the information and documents they need to create their common kit, etc. Individual work: • Each student looks for a press kit on the Internet and then presents it to the class. • Each answers the questions prepared by the teacher and then pools his answers with the other members of his group. • Exercises of self-assessment are offered to the students at different times during learning (e.g., self-assessment of how they take notes).

[1] The eight modules are available on the On Air web portal at the following URL: http://www.onair.medmediaeducation.it/default.aspx. A deep focus on the modules «To be or not to be…digital teens?» and «My You Tube» is made respectively in Ch. 6 and 7.

«Stop or Mrs. Grammar will shoot», by Zinev Art Technologies (Bulgaria)	
Writing skills	The focus of this educational module is on the improvement of students' knowledge about media (what they are, how media messages are created, how media embed values and viewpoints), and writing skills by learning about media and through media. Specifically, in terms of knowledge students are able to learn what media are, how media work, especially blogs, Facebook pages, videos, wikis. Students learn to identify, recognize, interpret, explain, summarize, give examples, illustrate, paraphrase and reflect on media messages and texts. In terms of skills students are able to assess, classify, use Internet resources; design, develop media and content, communicate clearly and correctly written texts. Lastly, in terms of attitudes students are able to challenge and question messages and texts in media, criticize and decide message they want to communicate to their peer-students, parents, and teachers through media. The instructional methods used in the current educational activity are Cooperative and Peer-learning; Discussions; Learning by doing. Contents are organized in three main activities, each requiring the active participation of teachers and students: Activity 1: Create and publish content; Activity 2: Make a video; Activity 3: Create and edit wikis. Every learning activity consists of learning actions and learning objects. Each activity also includes resources (for teachers and students), which could be of help in the process of implementing the learning activities.

«To be or not to be…digital teens» by MED (Italy)	
Critical thinking skills	The purposes of this educational module are, first, to promote and develop students' critical thinking in approaching media, and especially the Internet, and second to favour their capacity of writing media by creating online multimedia products. Today, one of the main challenges media educators have to face is to make children and teenagers learn to critically understand the oversized world of the online digital information. As is well known, the information overload issue along with the problem of quality of information on the Internet are raising more and more serious questions such as: How to evaluate information? How to identify and assess sources? This highlights an emerging need for cyber-literacy, where the Internet, its contents and narratives become the object of a necessary critical analysis and understanding. Moreover, the educational package also aims to promote students' creativity and ability to create digital products according to their own specific languages and grammars. The focus on different media is grounded in a cross-media approach to the issue of digital communication. The idea is that to completely develop critical thinking it is useful to cope with different communicative needs in terms of, for example, conceptual density, extension and intensity, recipient presence or absence, and the use or not of oral language. The educational module is based on the WebQuest technique, a teaching method which is inspired by Inquiry-Based-Learning-IBL. IBL is a pedagogical approach grounded in constructivism and focusing on the active participation of learners in the learning process. The idea is that learners build their own learning through a progressive process of problem solving, where the cycle of problem-hypothesis-test characterizes the whole activity. Another approach which characterizes this educational package is cooperative learning. Students are divided into small and heterogeneous groups to work together to solve the WebQuest problem/task..

«My You Tube» by MED (Italy)	
User skills	This educational module is mainly oriented to the development of user skills. It focuses on the consumption of You Tube with the aim of discovering and comparing visions and naïve conceptualizations of You Tube with a more realistic vision of it and awareness, to analyze its features and limits, and to plan a critical and conscious use of You Tube and the net. The project starts by surfing freely on the You Tube website, in order to familiarise students with the website they will examine. Then a first analysis and documentation of the navigation path is carried out. The analysis report requires rather detailed data aimed at verifying the students' prior knowledge and competences and arousing their interest in both the learning and exploratory stages. At the end of the project, students are invited to complete the form, to document the differences and the knowledge acquired. The second stage takes place in the classroom, using a sheet, and is focused on a description and naive representation of You Tube, and analysis of when, where and how users surf the net at home. A substantial part of the educational module aims at providing students with information on You Tube main features and categories, offering input and making them perform surfing activities. After the information phase, through a series of exercises, students search the web for videos and classify them according to specific instructions. In the final stage students will examine their preferences and motivations for enjoying You Tube. In addition, they will explain and compare their emotional states while surfing the net. Final feedback on the learning process and approval of the project follows.

«Through the media» by La Sapienza (Italy)	
User skills	This educational module could be a valid support for analyzing the dynamics of cross-mediality as a brand new didactical perspective, through the analysis of media content or issue. The module is based on the use of the Interactive White Board as a support by means of different languages intersect with the same content (cinema, radio, web, novel, videogames, etc.). Its main objective concerns the development of analysis capacities and textual consciousness, in front of different modalities to encode the same content. Writing and content development skills through different expressive codes, to have a dialogue with semantics and syntactic dimensions of the message, the aspects of the author and of the target of the message, having as basis of the project the implementation of the subject's critical competences in relation to a media text. The educational module is structured on three levels, i.e.: 1. Key concepts 2. Reading and user skills 3. Writing and critical analysis Every single step of the activity includes an analysis and production moment, for every single level of competence. - First level The introductory level contains a macro area dealing with two topics: cross-mediality and related texts analyzing this subject. Examples and materials refer to the comprehension of the passage from traditional narrative forms to new textual synergies of contemporary culture. - Second level The basic level aims at developing reading media skills, starting with input given by media educators. Students analyze, reflect and delve into entire steps of interpretation. Technical competences related to the use of involved media (audiovisual, radio phonic, narrative) are developed. Acquisition of appropriate competences for planning and production of edu-communicative products (e.g., following film/text analysis recontextualization of same content in a different media, such as radio text). Finally, units about reading, critical and codification competences of the media messages are included. - Third level The third level of the educational module is an advanced activity focused on the presentation of the technical competences about the realization of media products, stimulated by critical input. The final goal of the educational module is to provide technical/critical notions and competences in order to enable learners to project and implement media education programs.

«I am what I eat» by Kaunas University of Technology (Lithuania)	
Critical thinking skills	The learning purposes of this educational module are to promote students' critical thinking and problem solving, to enable students to search for targeted information through a variety of resources, and to select correct and suitable information, summarize it and provide it for the public. Issues about food and health are the main core of the teaching and learning activities proposed here. During the educational activities, students will learn more about healthy lifestyle, will be able to select the right products and food, will learn to think before taking what is before them. At the same time they will be able to use effective learning methods which promote critical thinking and independent, self-contained learning. Suggested paths will create a good classroom environment, open and responsible communication and cooperation. It will allow learners to assess the objectives and to attain better goals and results. Students will also learn to correctly select, analyze and summarize information, to work with media and to adapt it in different lessons where media usually are not used (chemistry, biology), to make presentations using ICT and be able to speak in front of auditorium (in native-tongue and English). All this develops higher thinking, the ability to evaluate information from various viewpoints. The structure of the unit consists of 4 stages. For each stage, the teaching-learning activities are briefly presented. Instructional methods have to respect the rules of using these methods (for example, to let the students to present the results of their work and discuss them in the classroom). Student activities can mostly run in the classroom which has multimedia (projector, PC or laptop) and computer lab (also possible to do homework). An exception is the first lesson where simple classroom without multimedia takes place.

«I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand» by WSinf (Poland)	
Reading skills	Comic books can hold students' attention longer than blocks of print because their format is equal part pictures and text. They are motivating for students to start reading on their own. Learning through comics can have academic and social value for children and teenagers with a creative approach to get students to combine skills such as reading, writing, brainstorming and conceptualizing ideas. Creating comic books would allow them to draw on their experiences and interests. When students use pictures, photos or clipart to create their own comics, they will remember and understand what they have learned much better. Without any doubt it is clear that when students read what excites them, they read better and they read more. Using a comic is less intimidating. The words may still be unfamiliar, but at least the pictures are universal. Having less text means fewer words to look up. Looking up three words is more manageable than looking up twenty-five. Fighting fatigue over keeping track of all the different vocabulary can cause second language learners to give up before they have the full story. Pictures are there to help students understand the story. Once students are engaged and understand part of the story, they will want to find out more. It is easier to plug in the missing pieces than to piece the entire story together word by word. The educational module has the following purposes: • promote literacy and to open up many educational avenues; • introduce concepts such as narrative structure and character development; • enhance the development of analytical skills and critical thought; • expand student's vocabulary in context; • open up a discussion of cultural and personal issues; • open up students' imaginations and promote creativity; • encourage students to create their own comics; • promote writing and self expression. The educational activity is structured in three stages: Stage 1 – Improve reading skills, learning about comics genre with the use of online resources, expanding English vocabulary; Stage 2 – Get acquainted with Comic Life software; Stage 3 – Comics development and evaluation.

«Let's Discover Together What's Behind News» by ActiveWatch-Media Monitoring Agency (Romania)	
Critical thinking skills	The major learning purpose of this educational module is to develop the critical thinking of students towards news and media messages in general and the rational behaviour of students as news' consumers. The reason for this approach is related to the media challenges the students have to cope with. For example, to live in the information society, dominated by the Internet, students have to develop their skills for critical examination of what they read, have to learn, reflect and re-examine what they have read. Secondly, through this educational module they practice instructional techniques that could improve the quality of the teaching-learning process, the objective being to involve the students in their learning activity and get them to learn by doing. The module focuses on the creation of a news bulletin, but in order to do this, students have to learn to select, analyze/ decode and evaluate news as consumers. The creation of the newscast makes students change their role – become journalists – but the aim is to help them gain a deeper insight into news production and become more responsible as news' consumers. At the same time, the educational module gives the students the opportunity to develop their creativity. The proposed activities and especially the production of a news bulletin determines student participation and reaction in a creative way, to express and develop their creativity. The content of this educational module is organized in one unit and focuses on news. Students have to create a newscast so as to develop their critical thinking towards news and news sources. To accomplish this task, students firstly have to analyze and deconstruct news. The teaching-learning process is based on the experiential learning model developed by Kolb-Fry which consists of four elements: concrete experience, observation and reflection, development of abstract concepts and testing in new situations. According to this model, the main stages of the teaching-learning process in the educational process are: 1. The concrete experience. Students are directly involved – as news' consumers – in a concrete experience/ activity. 2. Observation and reflection. Students are asked to observe and reflect from different points of view on the learning experience. 3. Development of abstract concepts. Students have to integrate their observations in the development of key concepts, in theories. 4. Testing in new situations. Students have to use the new acquisitions to make decisions and to solve tasks. According to this model the learning cycle can start from any of the four elements. Sometimes the steps of experiential learning are represented as a circular movement, sometimes as a spiral.

A. Parola
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Chapter 3
Research on Media Education. Issues, Models and Tools

1. Introduction[1]

Nowadays a large number of experiences and practices are being carried out at school in the field of Media Education (ME). However, teaching the media still seems to be a rather solipsistic task where «everything is fine». Indeed, this is also true for teaching in other fields, but in ME there is a tremendous lack of research concerning the educational practices' quality and effectiveness[2]. Therefore, over the last years the need to increase and enhance evaluative research in ME studies is ever-increasing[3].

This chapter focuses on research issues in ME with the general purpose of providing a contribution to the improvement of methods and tools in this research field and with the specific aim of describing the overall framework which inspired the pedagogical research of the On Air project.

In the first instance, we will concentrate on action research as a suitable theoretical background for educational problem solving dealing with designing action and evaluating results.

Then we will present and discuss the research process which characterized the experimentation of the media educational modules

[1] Even though this chapter has been jointly conceived by Alberto Parola and Maria Ranieri, Alberto Parola edited sections 2, 3, 4, 5.3 and Maria Ranieri sections 5, 5.1 and 5.2. Both authors jointly edited section 1.

[2] Cf. Jacquinot G., *De quelques repérages pour la recherche en education aux médias*, in P. Verniers (Ed.), *EuroMeduc. L'éducation aux médias en Europe. Controverses, défis et perspectives*, EuroMeduc, Bruxelles 2009, pp. 143-151.

[3] Cf. Trinchero R., *Valutare la competenza mediale*, in A. Parola (Ed.), *Territori mediaeducativi*, Erickson, Trento 2008, pp. 327-337.

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developed within the project. Here we will also describe the research tools and instruments that were used, and we will provide some concrete examples for them.

To conclude, we will wind up the chapter by focusing on the role of «good practices». As we will try to show below, we believe that «good practices» may work as worked examples providing teachers with suggestions and hints on how to translate good educational ideas into concrete applications. We also believe that «good practices» pertain with the so-called «professional knowledge» and as such they have a role for educational research and knowledge as well as for the «art of teaching».

2. The role of research between action and reflection

There is a wide convergence among educational researchers that when it comes to finding solutions for problems related to teaching and learning in the classroom and to developing effective and working educational materials, one of the most suitable approaches is action research. As is known, action research goes back to the '40s and since then it has improved its own methods and procedures, and has expanded its field of interest[4]. This approach derives from the work of Lewin (1890-1947), which aimed at linking research activity to the change and improvement of social systems and real situations with which the researcher comes into contact.

The 'epistemological device' at the heart of the action research is the so-called «self-reflective spiral», which entails a cyclic process where planning-action (implementation of the plans)-observation (systematic)-critical reflection take place in turn[5].

[4] Very briefly, in the '60s and '70s there was a renewed interest in the AR (Action Reasearch) that leads to develop procedures and possible areas of application. Internationally, significant contributions were given by Rapoport (1970), Barbier (1977) Pourtois (2006). Even in Italy, taking into account only the contributions developed in educational and teaching research, there was produced between the '80s and '90s a substantial amount of literature (see Becchi, 1992; Scurati and Zaniello, 1993; Orefice, 1993; Frabboni, 1993; Calvani, 1998; Rosiello and Trombetta, 2000; Parente, 2004; Losito and Pozzo, 2005; Zambelli, 2006). In particular, Orefice (1993) speaks of Participatory Action Research, an approach based on the integration of different types of interventions: qualitative research, self-education and improvement of living conditions of those concerned; Frabboni (1993) proposes a reflection on epistemological and methodological key; Scurati considered AR as a simultaneity of exploration, learning and emancipatory intent, and Zanniello the multidimensionality of the AR (Scurati and Zanniello, 1993). Calvani (1998) introduced the theme of online action research (Raol), highlighting the contribution that telematics can offer to the AR. More recently, Parente (2004) shows the operating range of the AR, Losito and Pozzo (2005) point out that this type of research is particularly suited to jobs characterized by actions and quick decisions, as in the case of teachers, and Zambelli (2006) in a thorough examination of the development of AR in the last two decades raises the question, critically, on the roles of researchers, professionals and practitioner (the teacher-researcher) in AR. A wider analysis of possible approaches to the relationships between teaching and research activity is provided by Calidoni (2004).

[5] See McNiff J., Whitehead J., *All you need to know about Action Research*, Sage, London 2006,

The purpose of action research is indeed to produce knowledge in context with the goal of producing an improvement of a specific educational practice. The action is the raw material of research: the objective is not only to collect data about reality, but also to transform it. The improvement of educational practice is determined on the basis of criteria of effectiveness and efficiency, but also psychological and socio-economic satisfaction of the practitioners involved[6].

The action research can be seen as a model of participant research (which directly involves the practitioners at different stages) and consists of a process intended to change behaviour, where issues related to design, implementation, and evaluation are of primary relevance[7]. Thus the emphasis must be placed not only on the declared needs, but also on those that figure as implicit: in fact, expectations, experiences, emotions, and conflicts are part of individual and collective cultures which are in turn intertwined with the logic and rational reasons of the professional practice. Bringing together educational practices and educational research often creates conflicts and opposing positions that should be handled with care, because teachers often find it difficult accepting the role of the «person observed» and getting involved in research.

The problem lies within the educational community, in our case the school, which has the objective of transforming the social reality involved and the behaviour of both teachers and students in the whole process of action, thanks to an effective process of internal negotiations and with the researchers' community. The research should lead to a higher level of awareness of the mobilized resources, and of the emotional and social mechanisms, while the researcher supports the practitioners and learns himself.

One of the most important skills of the social scientist (who may not alienate the dynamics of the research) is to be an agent of change (to which people often oppose or resist), giving priority to the importance of mutual exchange and discussion coordinated with the teacher, with the aim to develop a mutual and fruitful cooperation and agreement on a common interpretation of educational phenomena, including ME experiences.

Moreover, research can take on diagnostic connotations to identify problems by observing events, participant connotations during the collection of information which can motivate change (e. g., the emergence of training needs), empirical characteristics when documenting the process and experimental features when using assessment tools to evaluate competences. The acquisition of updated information, the development

and Mantovani S. (Ed.), *La ricerca sul campo in educazione. I metodi qualitativi*, Mondadori, Milano 1998.

[6] Trinchero R., *Manuale di ricerca educativa*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2002.

[7] See Somekh B., *Action Research. A methodology for change and development*, Open University Press, Maidenhead, Berkshire 2006.

of educational theories, the definition of roles and new approaches, and the identification of useful examples in the training process, characterize, therefore, our activity.

3. Some considerations on the testing of ME programs

A key aspect on which we focus in this chapter concerns models and tools to test ME programs. The relevance of evaluating and documenting the teaching and learning activities represents a fundamental change of attitude in undertaking these experiences: in fact, usually, the activities carried out in class are not systematically documented because documentation is not a task to be carried out by teachers. Instead these activities represent a key step in the involvement of a community of practice towards a common direction. In the field of ME, it is fundamental that the teacher becomes a «researcher». The teacher should not limit him/herself to evaluating students, but should be an observer and narrator of the process involving the class as well as her/himself, setting off good practices of self-observation, and building tools for evaluating the effectiveness of the experience and change brought about by the activities one engages in. To verify that the process is effective and that it might produce positive effects on the students, there should be a first test of the curriculum.

When speaking of «testing», we refer to a research strategy applied through a survey of the skills of incoming children, both before starting the activity and at the output stage, i.e. at the end of the educational activity.

The difference between the first and second survey provides information about the effects of the educational activity and shows us the change (if there is change, in which direction, to that extent), controlling, where possible, other variables.

The testing therefore aims to verify the applicability of the learning activities within each class and school contexts, and to develop appropriate survey instruments.

However, we agree in general terms with Buckingham, who on the topic of evaluation argues that we need a more dynamic approach combining reflective and critical analysis and creative production[8]. Given that the process and product (if applicable) are strictly interconnected, the teacher should abandon not rigorous approaches based on short experiences, and lack of courage and skills.

Therefore, an experimental attitude, which adequately clarifies the goals, while designing appropriate methods and tools to assess students' results, should be adopted.

Such attitudes, including reflection and self-evaluation, should not only

[8] Buckingham D., *Media education. Literacy, learning and contemporary culture*, Polity Press-Blackwell Publishing, London 2003.

be activated on demand by researchers, but should rather be consolidated in an alternating cycle within class life, with a continuous dialogical approach between «what we are doing», and thinking and reflecting on «what is done» by both teachers and students, who will learn this «way of being and doing» directly from the teacher himself.

According to Coggi, the assessment should not only focus on the knowledge that the subject has accumulated and reached, but must consider the overall process applied including the strategies involved, the difficulties and barriers encountered, and how they were overcome[9].

The evaluation process plays a key role in ME because the activities carried out inside and outside the school context need to be carefully observed and evaluated to define their effectiveness.

The evaluation action, as is known, requires answers to a number of key questions[10] such as «who evaluates?» (i.e., auto and hetero-assessment, triangulation), «for what purpose?» (i. e., initial, formative, summative, diagnostic evaluation), «what is to be assessed» (i. e., products and processes), «through which methods and techniques?» (validity, reliability, sensitivity) and «how is it formalized?» (e. g., grading, ranking, scoring, etc.). In ME providing answers to such questions is not so banal for a number of reasons. For example, it is not always clear where the responsibility of the evaluation action lies since there should be self-evaluation moments; the evaluation purposes could be different depending on educational objectives; the object of evaluation consists of a set of competences and skills, which are not always easy to assess; methods are frequently yet to be discovered, while the formalization is a consequence of the choices made during the evaluation process. Naturally, one must keep in mind that all this is to be accomplished by following the authenticity of the assessment as closely as possible.

4. Project, Process, Product

The testing of the ME modules developed within the On Air project was carried out in the theoretical framework of the action research, and was based on a repeating cycle of reflexive moments, aimed at developing hypotheses, intervention tools, and practical applications.

The overall work was structured into three phases, and for each one of them, tools were prepared for the detection or discussion within the research community. Here, we shall focus on each of the three phases, both in an attempt to highlight the dimensions that we have intended to assess through this experimentation and to present the tools and the procedures that have been used.

[9] Coggi C., *La valutazione delle competenze*, in C. Coggi, A. Notti (Eds.), *Docimologia*, Pensa Multimedia, Lecce 2002, p. 113-139.
[10] Trinchero R., *op. cit.*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2002.

Step One: Project Design and Reviewing

Generally speaking, an educational project requires that teachers adopt three diverse types of behaviour in three different moments of the project: at the beginning the «designer attitude», which involves imagination and construction; during the project development the «monitor attitude», which is oriented to guidance and control; and lastly a «reflexive attitude» aiming at comparing the distance between the project planned and what was really accomplished (see fig. 1). These are three different roles and three different ways of «being a teacher».

According to our vision on ME, teachers should take on all of these roles. Indeed, we can presume that teachers in their projects are used to planning a direct link between learning goals and assessment, but probably they are not used to specifying the goals analytically, and during the planning phase, to thinking about different and complex tools for individual and classroom assessment.

Keeping in mind this *file rouge* for all academic activities is always a fundamental element, but it is even more relevant when promoting not only knowledge and abilities, but also competences and skills.

Therefore, how has a ME project to be developed? In Ch. 2 we thoroughly analyzed ME design principles and models. Here, we focus on the issues that teachers should consider when experimenting and testing a teaching activity about media. These issues can be summarized in the content of a few questions such as the following:

- Can the project that I have planned and written be represented to and implemented by a colleague in my school and/or any other school in my country?
- Is my plan flexible enough to make it adaptable to other contexts?
- Can the project be articulated and disarticulated according to the space and time constrains of other colleagues, that is, can it be structured into modules or in simple and advanced levels?
- Finally, can my project be transferable, that is, can it be understood, repeated, and implemented in other similar settings?

These questions refer to the scientific culture of the designer who is able to control and manage his/her work activities from the design and development to the evaluation of the whole educational process.

With regard to the phase of control and management of a ME project, teachers should know «where they are going» (considering both the direction of the project and their own directions). The role of the media within the activity has to be well defined and what is to be evaluated at the end of the project has to be clearly specified.

Finally, teachers' reflection on the activity results, including evaluation, plays a fundamental role. Through such a reflection teachers will be in a position to comprehend that evaluation pertains not only to the final

stage of a learning/teaching process, but it lies also «within the process». Therefore, if the teacher is already used to thinking about evaluation, he/she will also be able to plan adequate observation tools to be used in the whole process. We will focus on this topic in greater detail below.

The last type of attitude/role consisting in the comparison between «what was planned» and «what was done», allows teachers to continue their work of documenting ME activity. The *ex-post* reflection has a crucial learning value both for expert and non-expert teachers. This is because the activity of documenting the process (through the use of diaries, checklists, rubric etc. and also with multimedia materials, photographs and audio-video) will be useful for their comparative reflection. Let's consider two contrasting situations:

- in the first case there is no difference between the project that was designed and the project that was carried out. This means that the teacher has planned a well-structured project, which was probably simple and allowed him/her to follow the various stages step by step. A positive aspect, here, is that the project itself is sufficient to repeat the experience in other contexts, while the negative aspect could be that the teacher might not have taken advantage of the (creative) classroom context to undertake new solutions that had not initially been thought of;
- in the second case there is a big difference between the project that was designed and the project that was carried out: the originally designed project will therefore need both a revision and a justification for changes made. At the same time, the added value of ME activities, i.e. the possibility for children to express their creativity through different languages, will probably emerge. In this case, the difference between the planned project and the implemented activity provides a learning opportunity because it highlights the potential of media educational activities that often prove to be unexpected and surprising.

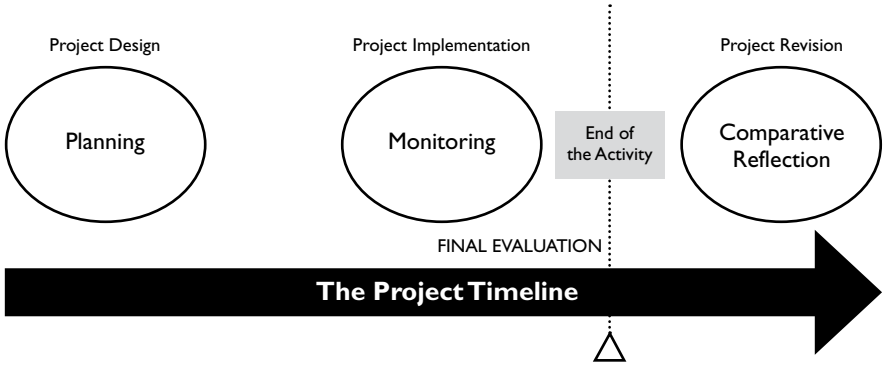

Figure n. 1 - The three teacher/designer's attitudes, i.e. planning, monitoring and comparative reflection

The reflection around the project can be supported and improved by colleagues and 'critical friends' within a given community and on the basis of a predefined set of common criteria. In the On Air project, every partner played the twofold role of being a 'critical friend' and being 'criticized' by others. Thus partners engaged in a process of mutual peer-reviewing based on the use of a common checklist that included the following questions:

1. Does the educational program explain its relevance to the target (teachers and/or learners)?
2. Are learning objectives clearly defined and operationalized? Are they pertinent with the media competence and skills framework?
3. Is the educational program clearly and coherently structured?
4. Does the educational program provide a variety of interactive activities?
5. Are learners given the opportunity to actively participate in the learning process?
6. Are teachers given tools to document the process? Are they appropriate?
7. Does the educational program include integrative resources for teachers and/or students? Are they adequate and sufficient?
8. Does the educational program include evaluation instruments such as a student satisfaction questionnaire, a pre-test, a post-test and other tools useful in assessing learning outcomes? Are they adequate?

At the end of the peer-review phase, the educational programs have been modified and improved.

Step Two – Process documentation and analysis

During the design phase, the teacher may have planned several observation and documentation steps and tools. The documentation of the process makes visible the teacher's observation activity and may take on different formats such as a narrative paper (e.g., a journal), or a more structured observation grid (check list, rubric, etc.), or an iconographic and video format (photos and audio-visual filming), or a combination of these, more or less structured and systematically used.

The systematic observation of the process represents a fundamental condition to completely and carefully document the educational activity and makes possible the three aforementioned teachers' roles/attitudes. Teachers should know at least one of these techniques and, as they can combine different instruments, they should select the more natural «planning and observation techniques» compared to their modus operandi and views. Furthermore, the integration of multiple techniques entails the collection of a larger amount of information (see below fig. 2).

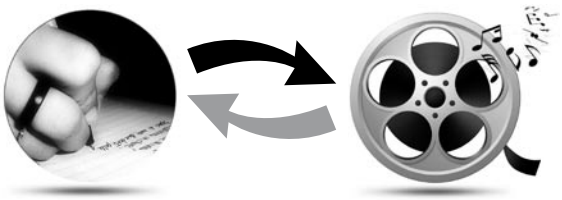

Figure n. 2 - The combined use of written and audio-visual documentation may allow teachers to better describe the educational process and enhance teachers and researchers' reflection on the evaluation of learning results and effectiveness.

In order to relate the implemented activities in a more careful and complete way some strategies should be adopted. Thanks to these strategies the 'reader' should be in a position to better understand the stages of the entire activity and the related implications. Speaking about 'readers' is not 'out of topic', indeed: teachers engaged in teaching the media have to plan their work thinking that it will be read by someone else. In general, teachers planning a project should:

- write up an abstract and a summary of the activities to 'let the reader get in touch with' the educational activity, thus giving an initial idea of it;
- introduce the theoretical framework to explain the conceptual basis and the arguments that have led to the planning of the activity (authors, literature, paradigms);
- describe with accuracy the context (including the macro-context, that is the place of the experience - little, middle, or big town -, the type of school, the classroom, the lab room or other) and activity procedures, in order to provide detailed and useful information which can help to understand the steps within each session and between one session and another;
- describe carefully the events that occur in the educational context: every detail can make the difference, when working with media because the 'permeating capacity' of mass media today is very strong and therefore roles, tools, and relationships have to be specified analitically;
- specify clearly who is working on the project: either the teacher is working alone or with other collegues from the same school, or with local bodies or other schools, or with different types of organizations;
- highlight everything that can be easily realized and observed in the classrooms: for example, groupwork is an educational method that, when based on the use of media, may give rise to interesting dynamics among students, totally different ones from those that usually occur within a traditional lecture. Therefore, the group activity considered as an entity that is superior to the sum of its components, should be read through the study of students' behaviour, opinions and attitudes.

Essentially, the documentative dimension should fall into more specific aspects that belong completely and originally to ME practices. Planning observation tools also means «building his/her own observation», his/her own worldview, and the 'filter' to be used to interpret the world. What should I observe? What aspects and dimensions should I underline when observing the activities of teaching the media? What is the most important media role to be highlighted, i.e. media as «motivating tools», or media as «objects», or media as «stimulators of creativity»?

Then, before teachers plan and implement their tools, they should 'educate' their own observation, even through some moments of self-observing, mainly to outline in the clearest way possible the relationship between the Teacher Self - the Personal Self - students - school - media - territory (fig. 3).

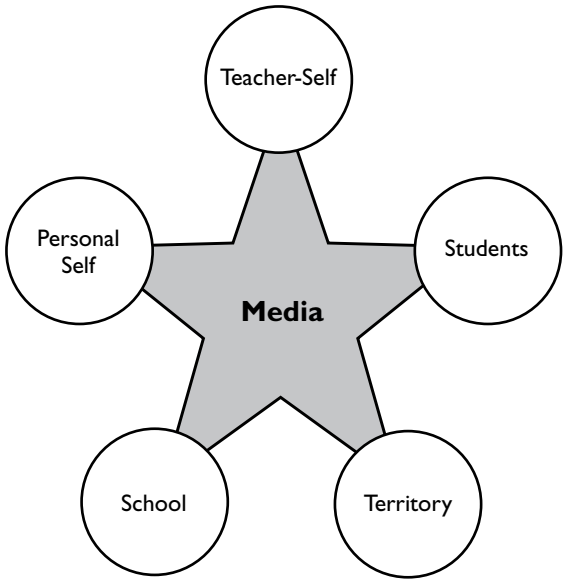

Figure n. 3 - During the process documentation phase, the teacher should always consider the relationships between the concepts represented in this graph.

The above graph tries to represent the complexity that characterizes ME practices. Indeed, when describing a ME activity, a narrative (or even more structured) text explaining the individual steps of an activity in a procedural way is insufficient. The number of the possible combinations one can figure out between the different relationships in the figure (for example, the relation between Personal Self – media – Teacher Self) brings out the need to talk of the students' surprises, emotions, commitment, and experiences, and take into account how much these aspects and their combination may influence the relationship between students and the

teacher. For example, the documentation of an educational process should highlight:

- the main issues faced by the teacher and the strategies to manage them;
- the most significant learning situations with an explanation and one or more examples;
- students' participation level;
- students' interest towards media;
- teachers' feelings during the experience;
- teachers' suggestions to improve the activity;
- any other information useful to understand the process.

The teachers and researchers involved in the On Air experimentation have been widely sensitized in relation to the documentation issues related to research work. To this purpose several observation grids and working tools have been suggested and shared, in order to track the process and record the most significant interactive situations involving both teachers and students.

Step Three – Evaluating the «product»

The product is intended to be the result of the process in all its dimensions and as such it is a part of the process itself. Indeed, the result of an educational process cannot be viewed as a unique product but has to be considered as a multiple concept. Therefore, when talking about «product» we referred to the results both in terms of students' reaction, learning and change, and in terms of media productions.

As far as the first issue is concerned, basing our work on the Kirkpatrick's Model[11] and adapting it to the diverse nature of our target, we considered the following dimensions:

Level 1: Reaction, a measure of students' satisfaction, which can be evaluated through questionnaires, surveys, focus groups, etc. The aim of this evaluation level is to understand whether or not the teaching activity was motivating, or whether or not the process was carried out in the best possible way. Questions which can be asked for on this level are: (1) «Which activities did you find most enjoyable? And why?»; (2) «Which activities did you find least enjoyable? And Why?»; (3) «What barriers did you encounter?»; (4) «How did you feel working with your peers?»; (5) «Would you repeat the experience?»

The starting point to create a questionnaire (or an outline for the focus

[11] Kirkpatrick D. L., *Evaluating Training Programs*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., San Francisco 1994.

groups) can be a list of activities characterizing a certain learning process, as shown in figure 4[12]:

1	Presentation of the production phases of a cartoon
2	Selection of the story to be represented
3	Selection of characters
4	Representation of characters
5	Creation of the storyboard
6	Creation of the scenography
7	Selection of animation techniques
8	Filming
9	Montage
10	Final evaluation of the product

Figure n. 4 –Possible activities characterizing a ME experience on cartoon

Given the above activities, possible questions to evaluate students' satisfaction are suggested below in figure n. 5.

1. Which activities did you find most enjoyable?
1 ❑ Presentation of the production phases of a cartoon
2 ❑ Selection of the story to be represented
3 ❑ Selection of characters
4 ❑ Representation of characters
5 ❑ Creation of the storyboard
6 ❑ Creation of the scenography
7 ❑ Selection of animation techniques
8 ❑ Filming
9 ❑ Montage
10 ❑ Final evaluation of the product
Please, explain why
.....
.....

[12] Cf. Parola A., Trinchero R., *Come valutare i percorsi di Media Education*, in F. Ceretti, D. Felini, R. Giannatelli (Eds.), *Primi passi nella media education*, Erickson, Trento 2006, pp. 33-45.

2. Which activities did you find least enjoyable?
1 ❑ Presentation of the production phases of a cartoon
2 ❑ Selection of the story to be represented
3 ❑ Selection of characters
4 ❑ Representation of characters
5 ❑ Creation of the storyboard
6 ❑ Creation of the scenography
7 ❑ Selection of animation techniques
8 ❑ Filming
9 ❑ Montage
10 ❑ Final evaluation of the product
Please, explain why
.....
.....

3. Which activities did you find least difficult?
1 ❑ Presentation of the production phases of a cartoon
2 ❑ Selection of the story to be represented
3 ❑ Selection of characters
4 ❑ Representation of characters
5 ❑ Creation of the storyboard
6 ❑ Creation of the scenography
7 ❑ Selection of animation techniques
8 ❑ Filming
9 ❑ Montage
10 ❑ Final evaluation of the product
Please, explain why
.....
.....

4. Which activities did you find most difficult?
1 ❑ Presentation of the production phases of a cartoon
2 ❑ Selection of the story to be represented
3 ❑ Selection of characters
4 ❑ Representation of characters
5 ❑ Creation of the storyboard
6 ❑ Creation of the scenography
7 ❑ Selection of animation techniques
8 ❑ Filming
9 ❑ Montage
10 ❑ Final evaluation of the product
Please, explain why
.....
.....

5. How did you feel working with your peers?
1 ❑ Positive
2 ❑ Indifferent
3 ❑ Negative
4 ❑ Other (please, specify)
Please, provide an explanation
.....
.....

6. How was your participation in work group activities?
1 ❑ Less active
2 ❑ Active
3 ❑ Very active
4 ❑ Important to the group
Please, provide an explanation
.....
.....

7. Was the realization of a final product important to you?
1 ❑ Yes
2 ❑ No

If yes, how much?
1 ❑ Fundamental
2 ❑ Very important
3 ❑ Important
4 ❑ Other (please, specify)
If yes, why?
.....
.....

8. What do you think was the purpose of this educational activity?
.....
.....

9. If you could change some of the activities to improve them, how would you change them?
.....
.....

10. Would you repeat the experience?
1 ❑ If yes, why
.....

2 ❑ If no, why
.....

Figure n. 5 – An example of students' satisfaction questionnaire

Level 2: Learning, a measure of skills and knowledge developed through the learning activity, which can be assessed using criterion-referenced tests, pre-tests/post-tests, observations, interviews, etc. This evaluation type has a twofold aim: on one hand, it intends to grade student performance, on the other hand, it provides useful information for teachers who can modify their teaching practices (if needed) and review the alignment between the educational activity's objectives and the teaching materials and learning experiences being offered.

When adopting learner-centered approaches and students are asked to create a product, a recommended tool to evaluate learning in terms of skills and knowledge, is the rubric. A rubric is a scoring tool that lists the criteria for a piece of work, describing and specifying the performances that students have to make in order to get a certain score or rating[13]. More analytically, it consists of a set of rules, prescriptions and criteria, aimed at providing ground for judgment formulation on specific student performance.

Such performances, which are usually complex and articulated, are divided into simple elements, and for each of them a rigid definition of expected performance standard is provided. The rubric is therefore a sort of 'specification' of the requirements that an essay or a product has to attain to satisfy certain quality standards. These standards of quality may be written as different ratings (e.g., Excellent, Good, Needs Improvement) or as numerical scores (e.g., 4, 3, 2, 1) which are then added up to provide a total score.

In this way, teacher expectations became explicit and clear, because the features determining the quality of the performance are identified in precise terms, just as the criteria to establish whether the standards have been met, and to what extent.

Students must be aware of the evaluation criteria and standards before starting their work, and the rubric may play this role helping students figure out how their projects will be evaluated. Through this tool, students know *ex-ante* which elements deserve to be considered and which topics are less relevant and can therefore be considered of secondary importance. Conforming to the model outlined by the rubric represents a tool for the student to understand when he/she is wrong, with positive consequences on the development of self-monitoring and self-evaluation.

Briefly, a «good rubric» should include[14]: a) well defined evaluation

[13] Arter J. A., McTighe J., *Scoring rubrics in the classroom: Using performance criteria for assessing and improving student performance*, Sage, Thousand Oaks (CA) 2001; Pellerey M., *Le competenze individuali e il portfolio*, La Nuova Italia, Milano 2004, pp.118-119; Scallon G., *L'évaluation des apprentissage dans une approche par compétences*, De Boeck, Bruxelles 2004, pp. 183-185.

[14] See Popham W. J., *Modern educational measurement. Practical guidelines for educational leaders*, Allyn & Bacon, Needham (MA) 2000, pp. 288-292; and Scallon G., *op. cit.*, De Boeck, Bruxelles 2004, p. 190.

criteria; b) the performance quality standards; c) the scoring criteria for each performance level (see an example for a rubric below, fig. 6[15]).

Criteria	Exemplary (3 points)	Proficient (2 points)	Partially Proficient (1 point)	Incomplete (0 points)
Aesthetic appeal	All the screenshots in the product have excellent graphics. The layout is clear.	Less than 20% of the screenshots are not well edited with problems related to margins and alignments, and also controversial combinations of images and texts.	Between 20% and 80% of the screenshots are not well edited with problems related to margins and alignments, and also controversial combinations of images and texts.	More than 80% of the screenshots are not well edited with problems related to margins and alignments, and also controversial combinations of images and texts.
Exhaustive information	Information is rich and correct.	Information is correct but not rich.	Information is partially correct.	Information is insufficient or mostly incorrect.
Etc.				

Figure n. 6 – An example of a rubric to evaluate a multimedia production

Level 3: Transfer, a measure of transfer of the knowledge, skills and, understanding gained by the student in the educational activity to critically understand the surrounding media world. This level refers to student change (in the short and long run) before and after the intervention, and can be evaluated through open item questionnaires, observations, or interviews, administered before and after the learning experience.

The change may involve the student as a reader, writer, critical thinker, media user, media citizen, i.e. the already considered areas which characterized the educational material developed within the On Air project. The purpose of this evaluation type is to understand to what extent the knowledge and skills that students have developed during the learning activity have also been appropriated by them, and embedded in the students' 'storage' of competences, even some time after the intervention took place.

For example: after attending the course on video production, does the

[15] Cf. Parola A., Trinchero R., *op. cit.*, in Ceretti et al., *op. cit.*, 2006.

student has the same approach as before in TV viewing? What has changed in his behaviour, opinions and attitudes before and after the educational intervention? Did he acquire a greater capacity for critical reading?

Figure 7 shows some examples of questions that can be asked to assess student changes in TV consumption models, before and after an educational activity on awareness in TV usage.

Other evaluation strategies can be based on low-structured tools such as essays or theme drawings (which falls in the category of projective instruments). Typically an essay requires that the student writes a text starting from an early stimulus and thus freely expresses his/her creativity (in the form of a story, for example, «Create a story with these three characters: ...»).

The theme drawings ask students to illustrate some aspects of TV programs (e. g., advertising, teens on TV, etc.) or aspects of analyzed media.

Name of the School	
Name of the Student	
Date	
Title of the educational module	
Country	

1. How do you select TV programs?
.....
.....

2. Do you think that TV programs have their own objectives?
If yes, what are they?
.....
.....

3. What does TV make you do? What does TV make you not do?
What could you do rather than viewing TV?
.....
.....

4. In your opinion why are cartoon programs transmitted
when children are at home?
.....
.....

Figure n. 7 – Possible questions to assess student change

The teachers and researchers involved in the experimentation set up instruments and tools to assess the three above mentioned levels, starting from a common set of instruments that have been shared and partly adapted.

With regard to media production, the product may be a book, or a newspaper, or a comic, a podcast or a video. All these can be considered as products of a ME activity. Indeed, they could also be or become tools documenting the educational process and not necessarily are they to be created at the end of the process.

From a traditional point of view, the 'material' product, for example, a video, can be evaluated from several perspectives (aesthetic, linguistic, etc,). Nevertheless, a product can be evaluated as a single item, as it is, or evaluated as a piece of research and learning process within a framework strongly related to contexts, people, needs and motivations. Unfortunately, the final product is very often ordered to third parties, becoming totally bankrupt of the value it was developed for. Eradicating the product from the 'culture' from which it derives, does indeed represent a mistake.

The 'classic' evaluation level, which is based on a number of criteria, is only the first step of the overall evaluation of the process, that starts with the beginning of the process itself, as noted above.

We suggest that the criteria to be used for this first step are: originality, content accuracy, communicative effectiveness, graphics appeal, and «ease of use».

Originality refers to the element of 'not yet seen' of a multimedia product. Unfortunately, the development of original products is not common in schools, since students tend to master the language and the 'eye-catching' sequences (in the case of TV) of *déjà vu* in the ME activities. Moreover, originality refers to the capacity of the text (audiovisual, web, photography, etc.) to be interpreted differently by the writer and the reader, even if it is based on non-original images.

Content accuracy means product completeness, including its ethical and aesthetic aspects.

Communicative effectiveness refers to the product's ability to 'say' exactly what it means, while still leaving room for different interpretations and points of view. In this case the product is said 'to leave its mark', managing to successfully deliver the communication of the message that students wanted their audience to perceive.

The graphics appeal is the aesthetic dimension in all its aspects, including analogical, digital, poetical, linguistic elements as well as aspects related to the packaging.

The «ease of use» criteria, which is also related to the issue of transferability, refers to the feasibility of the product's features being used by 'people who have never seen it', and therefore used in the most natural and spontaneous way.

In the On Air project teachers and researchers shared the above criteria in order to evaluate student production, as the final outcome of the learning process (see fig. 8).

Name of the Teacher/s	
Name of the Student/s	
Type of product	
Country	

Rate the project/experience on each item below using a 1-2-3-4-5 scale, with "1" = Low and "5" = High.

PRODUCT					
Originality					
Content accuracy					
Communicative effectiveness					
Graphics appeal					
Ease of use					
Comments					

Figure n. 8 – Product evaluation grid

The diagram below concisely synthesizes the overall research design, including the tools used (see fig. 9).

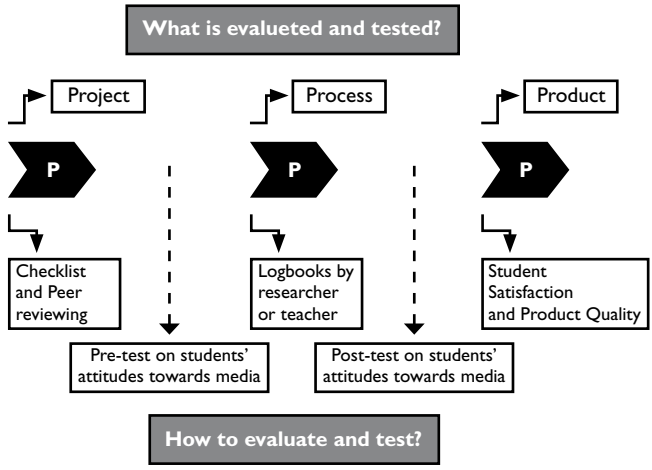

Figure 9 –The research structure with methods and tools

At the end of the testing phase, teachers and researchers involved in the process have produced a summary report, highlighting difficulties and outcomes. All the reports produced are included in the final transnational report[16].

5. In search of «good practices»

Over the last twenty years, expressions such as «best practice», «good practice» or «effective practices» have become very popular, so entering largely into institutional and academic lexicon. They are often used in a rhetorical or trivializing way, taking for granted that they can be used interchangeably[17]. Practices are qualified as «good» without explicit criteria and presuming implicitly that an individual judgement may have universal value. Very sensitive issues are neglected, such as: who decides what a good practice is? What criteria should be adopted to evaluate a good practice? What procedures should be used to validate a practice? How can a good practice be disseminated?

At the same time, the subject of «good practices» in education may have heuristic value. The gap between the academic research results and the practitioners' needs to improve their professional knowledge, has led to rethinking the role of «good practices» in the wider framework of the professional knowledge creation[18]. The school may in fact be seen as an organization that produces a particular kind of knowledge, the professional knowledge[19], that is «the organized body of knowledge that […] (people, *ndr*) use spontaneously and routinely in the context of their work […] a special domain of knowledge that is relevant to one's job»[20]. Probably, as explained by Hargreaves, the process of «knowledge creation», which characterizes the school, is better known as «developing good practice», and in its ideal form, requires complex validation procedures, very far from the misleading representations of «good practices» very popular in common sense.

[16] See the On Air web portal at the following URL: http://www.onair.medmediaeducation.it.
[17] Coffield F., Edward S., *Rolling out 'good', 'best' and 'excellent' practice. What next? Perfect practice?*, «British Educational Research Journal», 35, 3, 2009, pp. 371-390.
[18] See Hargreaves D. H., *The Knowledge-Creating School*, «British Journal of Educational Studies», 47, 2, 1999, pp. 122-144.
[19] Hargreaves, *ibidem*, p. 123.
[20] Kennedy M. M., *Working knowledge*, «Knowledge: Creation, Dissemination and Utilization», 5, 2, 1983, pp. 193–211. There exists a huge amount of literature on the development of teachers' professional knowledge and on the study of educational practices. It is out of our scope to present and discuss here all the different theoretical approaches and perspectives on the topic. We make reference to other volumes for further analysis from different research traditions, especially Schön (1983), Perrenoud (2001), Barbier (1996), Mc Navara (2002), Hargreaves (1999, 2004). For the Italian context, see Laneve (2005), Damiano (2004), Striano (2001), Calidoni (2000), Pellerey (1998).

In this section, we will focus on some of the raised issues, first by placing the attention on the concept of good practice and the complexity of validation and dissemination processes. Then we will present some tools that have been developed within the On Air project to document and evaluate ME practices. The overall purpose is to contribute with our analysis and proposal to the improvement of media educators' professional knowledge.

5.1 The concept of «good practices»

Let's first clarify the concept of «good/best practice», a notion undoubtedly characterized by a certain ambiguity[21] and, in a sense, even «inherently contestable»[22]. An author, who has long dealt with this construct in relation to primary school, is Alexander, who has identified five key dimensions in this concept[23]:

- political, which refers to practices suggested by powerful groups;
- evaluative, which considers practices in relation to personal values;
- empirical, which pertains to practices that research has shown to be more effective;
- pragmatic, which considers practices in their effects on the teacher's daily life (working/not working practices);
- conceptual, which concerns the conceptions that the individual has of good teaching and good learning.

These dimensions taken together raise critical issues that can be grouped into three main categories[24]: the ambiguity of current terms which shifts continuously between «good» and «best practices», the absence of explicit criteria and procedures for validation, and finally the transferability and dissemination issues. Let's look at each of these issues more analytically.

«Good practices» - «Best practices»: what makes the difference?

Although in common language people indifferently use either good or best practice, the two adjectives «good» and «best» do not mean exactly the same concept: there is deep confusion about merely a good idea, a good practice, which implies some kind of validation, and a best practice, which implies that it has been shown to be superior to other good practices[25].

In other terms, the concept of «good practices» seems to be, in a sense,

[21] Cf. Hargreaves D. H., *Learning for life: the foundations for lifelong learning*, Policy Press for the Lifelong Learning Foundation, Bristol 2004; Scott J. C., *Seeing like a state: how certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*, Yale University Press, New Haven (CT) 1998.
[22] Coffield F., Edward S., *op. cit.*, p. 317.
[23] Alexander R., *Policy and practice in primary education: local initiative, national agenda* (2nd edn), Routledge, London 1997, p. 287.
[24] Coffield F., Edward S., *op. cit.*, pp. 375-376
[25] Hargreaves D. H., *op. cit.*, 1999, p. 128.

a less demanding notion, requiring only «some kind of validation». On the contrary, the idea of «best practices» appears to be a more ambitious construct: a practice that has been proposed as the best practice candidate should prove to be the best compared to other practices on the basis of adequate supporting evidence. The possibility to distinguish between «good» and «best practices» suggests the idea that we are dealing with a 'scalable' concept which requires more or less rigour according to needs, contexts and claims to validity/reliability. Sometimes, it can be useful and sufficient to optimize the results of a certain practice when we consider such results to be effective in a given community of teachers on the basis of transparent procedures, this can be done with no particular claim to universality. Here, the good practice may provide guidance as a worked example or some contributions to be adapted and implemented in the context. Let's think banally about the re-use of learning materials (which can range from lesson plans to multimedia presentations) to be adapted to a specific target. Today the web is full of educational contents produced by communities of teachers, but not all content is of equal quality. A selection of them on the basis of shared criteria within a community of peer reviewers may lead to the identification of valid and re-usable content with appropriate adaptations.

Other times, there is a need to find solutions to be proposed as paradigmatic for educational problems of a certain complexity. Think of the difficulties of a teacher in today's increasingly multicultural classes, consisting of students with different linguistic backgrounds. In these cases, we need not only guidance, suggestions or contributions of work, but optimal (while not exclusive) and evidence based solutions (it would be disastrous for the teacher and his students to rely on practices given as paradigmatic, without adequate evidence). We can say that the more a practice aspires to having a paradigmatic and universal value, the more a high level of validity, reliability and substance must be guaranteed.

Who and how to validate «good practices»?

Who evaluates the «goodness» of a practice and upon which criteria? Under which conditions can a practice be considered «good» or «the best»? For whom is a practice is good or better? Based on what values or factors? On what evidence? These are very complex issues, which researchers have been debating for some time. In this regard, Hargreaves's reflection is still useful, when he distinguishes between different types of knowledge validation, including:

> […] *ipsative* - the teacher makes a personal judgment by comparing present with previous practice or with an alternative practice observed in another teacher or read about in professional papers; social - a professional group, through analysis, discussion and debate, reaches agreement on what is a better practice than some others; independent - a consumer, or purported

> expert […] has a view of what is a good practice; judicial - in courts of law, evidence is any material which tends to persuade the court of the truth or probability of some asserted claim. Among educators, evidence of the effectiveness of a practice and its underlying knowledge might be regarded as any material which persuades practitioners of the effectiveness of the practice […]; scientific - the practice is established as effective or as better than another through formal research that follows scientific rules of procedure[26].

The first type of validation, which is often accompanied by forms of socialization, is the most widespread, but is certainly insufficient when speaking of knowledge. However, in so far as self-validation requires to make explicit and codify one's own experiences (by comparison with past experience or the experience of others), it also involves reflection on the latter as well as forms of self-monitoring and self-regulation that may be of some use for action.

The last type of validation, which is the most sophisticated, requires that teachers themselves undertake a research activity in the perspective of designing, creating and sharing well working practices. For example:

> […] teachers engaging in some forms of action research attempt to combine the ipsative with the scientific – and sometimes also add social forms of validation. The knowledge-creating school will apply demanding forms of knowledge validation to supply evidence for the effectiveness of its new practices[27].

Here we come back to action research which we considered in previous sections. However, between self-validation and action research intermediate levels can be identified, which we believe to be fruitful to reflect on «good practice». At this intermediate level the following key concepts should be taken into account, i.e.:

- transparency, that is the explanation of implicit assumptions, objectives, expectations, procedures and results;
- the definition and specification of assessment criteria to evaluate the «goodness» of an experience;
- the development of validation mechanisms and procedures, with the involvement of external subjects such as peer reviewers or subject experts;
- the «judicial evidence», which is any material or evidence (e. g. products made by students, or a video filmed during a lecture in the classroom, feedback from parents, etc.) useful in convincing third parties of the likelihood of the effectiveness of a certain practice.

[26] Hargreaves D. H., *op. cit.*, p. 128.
[27] *Ibidem*, p. 129.

How to disseminate «good practices» and «best practices»?

We usually turn to «good practices» as examples to be imitated. The concepts of «good practice» and «best practice» seem to include the idea of its transferability and dissemination. However, even here we are faced with a very complex issue: the practice came about in a specific context to meet specific objectives, it is aimed at specific students and is sensitive to the values and motivations of the individual who follows it through. The practice is rich of context, it is strongly embedded. How can it be transferred to other contexts?

Eraut thematises the issues at stake indicating five interconnected stages[28]: (1) identification and extraction of potentially significant knowledge from good and best practices, (2) understanding the differences and similarities between old and new contexts of application, (3) identification of relevant knowledge and skills for the new situation, (4) adaptation of the identified knowledge and skills to the new situation, (5) significant knowledge and skills must be combined in a holistic performance that allows the practitioner to think, act and communicate effectively in the new improved practice.

In his analysis Eraut indicates clearly the challenges the practitioner has to face when transferring knowledge and skills from one context to another: hardly an easy undertaking where outcomes are far from obvious. Upstream, however, the problem of transferability is linked more generally to that of the generalization of research results in education. This is a problem on which the educational research has long debated[29]. The road ahead is still a long one to pursue. Comparative studies, thick comparisons and research of evidence are the key terms, especially when speaking of «best practices».

5.2 How to document ME practices?

Now we come to the instruments set up in On Air to document and evaluate ME practices. The use of documentation and assessment tools based on pre-structured instruments responds to the need in meeting the requirements of transparency, validation and 'judicial evidence' previously mentioned.

The description of an educational practice may in fact be useful at three levels allowing the teachers to: (1) design a ME course or program taking into account all the relevant aspects and finding a balance, (2) document the process focusing on the significant elements of experience, (3) provide a description of the educational activity characterized by completeness, reflexivity and replicability.

[28] Eraut M., *Transfer of knowledge between education and workplace settings*, in H. Rainbird, A. Fuller, A. Munro (Eds.), *Workplace learning in context*, Routledge, London 2004, pp. 201–221.
[29] Trinchero R., *op. cit.*, 2002.

Here we focus on the last function, suggesting a documentation tool capable, from our point view, in delivering a complete picture of the experience lived, to stimulate thinking about what was done and the possibilities to replicate the experience in similar contexts. This tool, called «Case studies form» has been prepared under the On Air project to collect ME practices and then evaluate them (see next section).

The items in the form were organized in a general section including title, abstract, topic, areas of competence, and media used, and an analytic section which includes a description of objectives and purposes, teaching methods, evaluation strategies, results, difficulties encountered, experience achieved, transferability, future development, and experience context[30].

Let's go into further detail. First the form includes the title and a short abstract where the teaching activity (which can be limited to a few hours or expanded to different teaching periods of a school year) is presented in a few lines underlining the main aspects. The «abstract» instantly clarifies the objectives, methodology, the instruments and the results. In other words it is a first step towards the filling of the full form, thus providing teachers the possibility to clarify their own ideas on the project.

The item «topic» refers to the field of knowledge of the teacher and to which domain of teaching it belongs. It can be developed in a cross-curriculum approach involving more than one teacher in a team. Specification of the topic and the subject areas proves to be to be useful not in descriptive terms: often teachers are concerned with the difficulties met in inserting ME in the school curriculum. School today is often the object of an overload of stimuli which burdens on an already complex situation, without even considering the delicate ecology that regulates school life. Lack of time, resources, and attention produces frustrated teachers. For this reason, greater efforts must be invested to demonstrate how ME can be integrated within the traditional curricula without overlapping contents, but supporting efforts to reach the educational objectives in a synergy of purposes.

The competence areas indicated in the form represent a novelty for the teacher: even when we refer to European guidelines, in school knowledge and skills are no longer the sole objectives, but the attempt is to a achieve more complex learning goals consisting in the development and consolidation of competences as opposed to the simple acquisition of capacities and skills. Moreover, this more complex goal in ME refers not only to the competences connected to subject areas (the use of knowledge and skills in real life contexts), but also to transversal competences. Such transversal competences can be equally applied in all disciplines

[30] A reduced version of the «Case study form» has been created containing only the following entries: general information about the school, media skills, media used, an overall description with information on objectives, teaching strategies, results and criticalities.

and in a wide range of tasks, with the aim to improve one's character, personality, and his/her capability in facing the real world and promoting a profile which is representative of a future citizen. We are referring to reading, writing, and critical thinking and user skills. We can envisage how these four competences areas might stimulate the pupil to pose questions relevant to media messages: «What are the linguistic aspects that characterize this message?» (reading), «Why did the author write this message?» (writing), «What values and views inspired this message?» (critical understanding), «Am I really interested in the consumption of this message?» (use/consuption awareness). If the pupil is able to formulate questions of this kind, we have evidence of his/her capacity in dealing with media messages correctly (from TV, radio, web, video games, videophone, comics, newspapers, etc.) and therefore we may presume that the pupil has developed a number of media competences, that is the basic elements to become a citizen capable of using appropriate instruments to live in his/her society with awareness (what effect does this message have on society?), while respecting other and different forms of expression[31].

As for the media used, a distinction must be made between the notion of media as functional means to the best accomplishment of the intended learning objectives and competences, and the equipments used (computer, software, photos, pictures, video clips, websites). The distinction is important because they are often confused. The use of the web to develop critical understanding (which is functional to the attainment of ME objectives) is different from the use of the Internet to search for pictures to be used for the realization of a class newspaper: in this case the media used is the print, while one of the tools is the web. If we consider an opposite viewpoint, we might envisage the use of the newspaper for a news search, to then use the web for the «critical research» of the same item or items of news: in this case we use an instrument, the newspaper, for a task centred on the use of the Internet (the media used). Again, sometime the media adopted can be also used as a simple functional tool to develop the activity (and this aspect should be indicated).

With regard to the description of the experience/project the form suggests specification of overall purposes and the specific objectives: the purposes represent a set of general hypothesis that are not yet verified, but which can be verified by the end of the activity. They constitute a reference point for a curricular project aiming to reach a long term goal. Specific objectives are naturally linked to general purposes, but they are associated with more limited areas of knowledge that can be easily observed and assessed. The complete description of aims and objectives represent the preparatory phase of all the activities and is the main reference for the

[31] Cf. Ceretti F., Felini D., Giannatelli R. (Eds.), *op. cit.*, Erikson, Trento 2006.

creation of evaluation tools to assess the learning results acquired by the end of the process.

With regard to teaching methods, we refer to one of the main qualities of being a teacher: the planning of a teaching activity. The teacher should be able to articulate the overall activity into several different phases, identifying the preparatory, the middle, and the final stage which can bring to the creation of a product. For each phase the strategies and the teaching techniques (kind of lesson, brainstorming, models, case study, role play, simulation, cooperative learning, problem solving, etc.) to be used, should be defined. This will allow the teacher to reflect on method appropriateness in relation to aims and purposes. The planning phase could be exhaustive in making methods and procedures explicit but proves to be insufficient. As is well known, a retrospective analysis is still necessary for the final evaluation since the real experience could be different from what was originally planned. The initial view is only partial. The teacher's ability to control unplanned events and redirect towards planned procedures is fundamental and is to be distinguished from the small «amendments» that teachers introduce according to the context.

Once the description of the teaching/learning activities has been concluded one needs to check the result obtained. The results must be confronted with the initial objectives. Indeed, in ME experiences there are three types of results, the expected and positive ones, the mistakes (more or less expected), and the unexpected positive results which reinforce the planned learning objectives. First of all the focus must be on the first two types: to what extent have the expected results been obtained? Then the mistakes and the deviations, noted in the journal of the experience, have to be reported. Lastly, even the unexpected results have to be highlighted because they could represent an added value to the scientific community, suggesting new hypothesis and stimulating schools to undertake new experimentations as well as improving the relationship between theory and practice.

Besides the teaching methods, there are the challenges that the teachers face during the process. In this field, information about the role of the teacher, the relationship with the students and, in some cases, with their families, the capacity to cooperate with colleagues, the gratifications, the delusions, and teacher's capacity to reflect on their professional activity, should be noted. In this way, the analysis also includes the relational competences, the emotional side of the experience (e.g., sense of inadequacy, passions, feelings, motivations, high esteem from the class and self esteem, courage, and emotions) and the choices made to overcome obstacles and limit negative effects that continuously tend to mine the ideal setting of the educational project designed by the teacher. The unplanned events in the classroom can be seen as an obstacle or as an opportunity: here the teacher's capacity to handle his/her frustration, and use his/her creativity

come into play. Naturally, the choice should be consciously made and described. This field is very important because, beside the teaching process, it contains the crucial personal variables which, if emphasized, have a key role in the production of good practices. Besides these personal resources, other potentially positive variables are hidden in the wider context of a learning and teaching experience. We are referring to the territory and its cultural, human, and social resources: making the vital connection between what takes place in the classroom and what happens outside the classroom environment is a challenge to be conquered in the field of ME.

Moreover, strictly connected to the teaching activity and the aforementioned challenge, there is the description of what was learned during and at the end of the experience that also entails a professional development. In many cases, at the end of ME activities, teachers 'feel' that something important has happened, that it is still possible to get involved, that it is possible to 'think' and 're-think' teaching. Teachers realize that they were 'stuck in a scheme' and that they must now step back from the experience and critically observe themselves in order to abandon methods and approaches which come to represent now an obstacle rather than a personal development tool.

Finally, the evaluation process must be described with particular emphasis on the attainment of planned objectives. First of all, let's distinguish between observation and evaluation of the process and of the product. Process evaluation includes the in itinere, observation and description of the different phases of experience through the use of specific tools. Product evaluation, on the other hand, being the final step of the process, refers to the capacity of the product to provide 'evidence' of the experience had both for the designer, and for external subjects (e.g., other schools and the pupils' families).

Moreover, 'documentative products' and 'educational products' must also be distinguished. In many activities the first type of product only has the aim of resuming, socializing and enjoying and is not part of the teaching and learning process. The second type of product is conceived as the natural completion of the teaching process, and possesses 'a functional value' supporting the development of competences. This is due to the fact that, being planned and created by the pupils, it has a learning value which integrates different media skills and competences such as reading, writing, critical thinking, and user skills (despite the focus often being on the writing). Therefore, an appropriate description of a practice should specify the difference (if any) between the documentation addressed to the socialization of the process, and the documentation addressed to the description and reflection on the process.

If all the fields and the items are clearly and accurately described, the description of the teaching practice may contribute to the transfer of the activities thus allowing other colleagues repeat or use it as a starting point for a similar practice in a different context. To enhance replicability the

field transferability should include the main contextual elements required to repeat similar experiences. Identifying these elements is not an easy process, because it requires the capacity to analyze the activity stepping back from the experience and making a relevant meta-cognitive effort. An extra effort is required as findings cannot be generalized, because they are not the results of an experimental or quasi-experimental research. We are in a situation where the expert practitioner who reflects on his/her practice is able to indicate the enabling factors, in the absence of which the experience cannot likely be replicated.

Lastly, a consideration on the future development of the experience is also needed. A ME experience should not be limited to an extemporary activity, but should be an event followed by other related experiences within the curriculum. Moreover, thanks to this type of experience, the teacher can self-assess his/her communicative and didactic development, and re-design new projects to constantly increase pupils' competences. At first glance the competences of reading, writing, critical thinking, and consumption awareness could be seen as propaedeutic to each other. However, there is not a propaedeutic relation between competences, but a circular connection because being a good reader entails being a good writer, the increase in critical understanding may improve one's writing skills, and improved writing skills may have positive effects on the rapidity and effectiveness with which one reads media messages.
To better explain this concept we have added a fully filled in form in Box n. 3.

5.3 How to evaluate ME practices?

The documentation of a ME experience is only the first step towards the explanation of the underlying visions that gave rise to an educational process and of the procedures that were adopted to implement the project. This is an initial effort oriented to transparency equipped with an intrinsic value of knowledge, since it enables the subject to reflect on what he/she has done and correct it, if necessary (self-regulation), while allowing other subjects to compare their own work with the work of others. In other words, this is a sort of preliminary 'reflexive exercise' which is necessary for the identification of teaching practices. The next step to move from «practice» to «good practice» is to define explicit validation criteria to evaluate the quality of the experience documented.

In the On Air project, these criteria are made explicit and shared through an evaluation form, which was conceived and designed as a tool able to capture some useful aspects for a more thorough analysis of ME teaching and learning processes.

The form consists of the following indicators: educational relevance, teaching approach, media use, sustainability of the experience, product,

documentation quality, evaluation system and tools (see below fig. 10). Each of them includes four or five items to be considered during the evaluation process. The evaluator may also enrich the evaluation by leaving a comment for each group of items, concluding with an overall evaluation of the experience. Furthermore, the form also asks for a title of the experience, the name of the evaluator, the name of the institution, the role of the evaluator, and the country where the evaluation took place. To score the experiences an ordinal scale ranging from 1 (very negative judgement) to 5 (very positive judgement) is suggested.

Let's start with educational relevance. The field of items included (i. e. «Significance of the educational objectives», «Integration into the curriculum», «Impact on the school», «Involvement of external educational agencies») refers to the overall scholastic system with a judgement that starts from micro- elements (e.g., the objectives), to then expand until it reaches all the learning community. With the item «Significance of the educational objectives» the intention is to emphasize the relation between the project's learning objectives related to the media (e.g. the development of reading skills of a newspaper's website) and wider learning objectives related to the development of the students' critical thinking. If the teacher explicitly declares the specific learning objectives relating them to relevant macro- objectives, the score will be 5. Lower scoring will be indicated where objectives are not as relevant, or are not declared (1).

The second item («Integration into the curriculum») refers to the capacity of the experience to be integrated into the school curriculum. Besides the possibility that the experience was carried out by one single teacher, or by many colleagues at the same time, the experiences regularly carried out during classroom activities (e.g. using a fiction to teach history, emphasizing the differences between the narratives forms characterizing the fiction's audio-visual language compared to school handbooks) are evaluated with a high score (5).

The score will be low, if the experience has been implemented outside the standard teaching program, and even lower when the experience has been carried out as an extracurricular activity (1). The item «Impact on the school» regards the active and positive involvement of the school headmasters, teachers, and families in the activity, while the «Involvement of external educational agencies» places emphasis on the school's capacity to cooperate with other bodies, identifying the right external competences for fruitful integration.

As previously mentioned, at the end of each group of items related to the same indicator, the evaluator can add a comment highlighting the aspects that should be taken into consideration in the experience's final evaluation.

The second group of items is related to the «Teaching approach», and includes the following categories of reference: «Planning appropriateness»,

«Effectiveness of the methods», «Content accuracy and appropriateness to the student level», and «Student engagement». The first item, i.e. «Planning appropriateness», refers to the teacher's capacity of making explicit every step of the learning activity to enable other colleagues to understand and repeat the activity. The item «Effectiveness of methods» focuses on the relation between the teaching methods (e.g. either working group or individual or study) and the learning objectives, while when considering the «Content accuracy and appropriateness to the student level» the attention is shifted to the relation between the educational contents and the teacher's capacity to adapt them to the student's age group and characteristics. The last item, i. e. «Student engagement», is directly related to the previous one, that is the teacher's capacity to plan and implement engaging learning activities both in terms of content appropriateness and in terms of playful nature (which stimulates student attention) of the experience carried out.

The third group of items is centred on the «Media use» and includes: «Added value for the experience/project», «Appropriateness of topics and competences», «Variety and integration of media used in the experience/project», «Ease of use for both teachers and students». The first item, i.e. «Added value for the experience/project», refers to the fact that the use of the media has been truly planned to improve the effectiveness of the teaching activity in relation to objectives set. This dimension is strictly connected to the second item, i.e. «Appropriateness of topics and competences», which concerns the teacher's choices connected to topics as well as media skills and competences to be promoted in class. The third item, «Variety and integration of the media used in the experience/project», introduces the idea of an interactive and dynamic integration among different media within the same activity, and at the same time refers to the teacher's capacity to use them reducing disturbing and misleading factors. Finally, the «Ease of use for both teachers and students» concerns media usability and its implications for the teaching and learning activity: when media are usable and not disturbing elements, they may on the one hand provide teachers with the opportunity to enhance their teaching effectiveness, and on the other hand provide students with the possibility to better learn and improve their media competences beyond their instrumental use.

The fourth group of items points to the «Sustainability of the experience» and includes elements such as «Time management», «Staff sustainability», «Equipment affordability», and «Cost effectiveness». The first in the list, i.e. «Time management», refers to the capacity in accomplishing the experience in the time initially planned, bearing in mind the unexpected which may occur in daily school life. The second item, i. e. «Staff sustainability», focuses on the teacher being able to truly rely on a planned joint effort with colleagues and technical experts according to individual competences and the modality of intervention previously established. «Equipment affordability» refers to the possibility of using a computer

lab in the school and to the availability of equipment such as computers, Internet connection, video cameras etc., that is all the tools without which the planned experience cannot be implemented. Lastly, the item «Cost effectiveness» refers to the financial support needed by the experience: to become a real part of the curriculum a ME activity should be accomplished with appropriate financial support, but this does not mean that huge funding is required. Many ME projects can be implemented with simple instruments which are already available in the schools, or with a limited budget. However, when teachers plan to use particular digital media, the 'shopping list' can amount to several thousands of Euros to purchase digital cameras, video cameras, or editing software and so on.

Once the teaching/learning activity is about to wind up, in many cases, but not always, the teacher plans the creation of a final product (or products). The items related to the fifth indicator, i.e. «Product», are: «Originality», «Content accuracy and communicative effectiveness», «Graphical appeal», and «Ease of use». When talking of «Originality», we refer to a production (e.g. video clips) which tends to be far from the typical *cliché* of school productions or stylistic models typical of television standards. The second item «Contents' accuracy and communicative effectiveness» concerns the teacher's care in refining the final product as a last step in the learning process, so referring to the linguistic accuracy, and the communicative effectiveness of the message (Does the product really reflect the whole process? Is it able to relate the experience? Can it be understood by families? etc.). It also refers to the teacher's effort to assure that the final product really express and reflects student and not teacher creativity.

The sixth group of items is about the «Documentation quality» (if documentation is available). When an educational activity is documented, or even better when it is well documented, it can be evaluated and, where possible, transferred to other contexts. Good documentation is a fundamental requirement for evaluation and transferability. The items included here are: «Completeness of documentation», «Appropriateness of documentative methods and tools», «Appropriateness of media used for process documentation», and «Dissemination». The first item «Completeness of documentation» refers to the fact that teachers often report their experiences through fragmentary information, and are scarcely able to provide an exhaustive picture of the experience in all its phases and steps. However, there are many ways to report one's work, by using paper, through different techniques, and with audio-visual and digital instruments. The second item «Appropriateness of documentative methods and tools» addresses the attention to the use of documentative aids and techniques to report the educational processes which brought the class to the attainment of the expected media competences.

The third item «Appropriateness of media used for process documentation» places the attention on media considered as reporting tools

useful to socialize the experience. This last dimension should be clearly identified by the teacher in order to avoid misleading overlaps between the creation of the product and the evaluation of the process. The last item of the list, namely «Dissemination» refers to the teacher's motivation and capacity of spreading the experience inside his/her institutional context and throughout the local territory with the use all of the communication means that he/she possesses (e. g., personal meeting, conference, magazine or web publication, participation in other projects etc.).

Finally, the seventh group of items focuses on a set of assessment criteria that cannot be considered objective, but which helps highlight several complex issues. The first item, i.e. «Relevance of knowledge, skills and competence assessed», stimulates reflection on differences between the three terms (i. e., knowledge, skills and competence) that are often considered synonyms, generating some confusion and misleading representations of concepts at stake. The second item, i.e. «Completeness of learning dimensions assessed compared to project's purposes», points out to a very common issue in the planning of ME activities. Indeed, the connection between the stated objectives and the evaluation strategies plays a key role in the success of such activities and on the possibility to well document the experience in such a way that it can be also easily understood by others. The third item, i. e. «Appropriateness of assessment tools» focuses on the teacher's ability to select adequate tools from a pool of possibilities. Frequently, the teacher tends to base his/her evaluation activity on well-known techniques, rejecting other new solutions that could raise difficulties for him/her. But ME requires evaluation strategies able to seize both disciplinary and transversal competences, both interpersonal and social competences. The last item, i.e. «Appropriateness of process monitoring tools», highlights the difficulty of accounting for the dynamics that led to the construction of the product: especially in ME activities teachers and educators tend to overestimate the result of work done on the languages simply as a result of the fascinating and playful characteristics of the languages themselves. On the contrary, the attention should be placed on the use of the languages during the process, that is when students are using them. This should be object of observation rather than the final product in its crystallized form.

Title of the experience/practice	
Name of the School	
Country	

Evaluate the experience/practice in each aspect by using a scale of 1-5 where 1 is low and 5 is high.

EDUCATIONAL RELEVANCE					
Significance of the educational objectives					
Integration into the curriculum					
Impact on the school					
Involvement of external educational agencies					
Comments					

TEACHING APPROACH					
Planning appropriateness					
Effectiveness of methods					
Content accuracy and appropriateness to the student level					
Student engagement					
Comments					

MEDIA USE					
Added value for the experience/practice					
Appropriateness of topics and competences					
Variety and integration of media used in the experience/practice					
Ease of use for both teachers and students					
Comments					

SUSTAINABILITY OF THE EXPERIENCE					
Time management					
Staff sustainability					
Equipment affordability					
Cost effectiveness					
Comments					

PRODUCT (IF ANY)					
Originality					
Content accuracy and communicative effectiveness					
Graphical appeal					
Ease of use					
Comments					

DOCUMENTATION QUALITY					
Completeness of documentation					
Appropriateness of documentative methods and tools (diary, observations, checklist etc.)					
Appropriateness of the media used for process documentation (text, audio, video etc.)					
Dissemination					
Comments					

EVALUATION SYSTEM AND TOOLS					
Relevance of knowledge, skills, and competence assessed					
Completeness of learning dimensions assessed compared to project's purposes					
Appropriateness of assessment tools (i.e. speed test, performance test, small scenario, rubric etc.)					
Appropriateness of process monitoring tools					
Comments					

OVERALL COMMENTS
.....

Name of the evaluator	
Name of the Institution	
Role	

Figure n. 10 - Evaluation Form

The above criteria have been considered in the On Air project to select good examples of ME practices carried out at schools. Of course, the ME practices' selection was made after the stage of practices' collection and description, and involved groups of experienced teachers and researchers. The validation process was articulated in three stages: (1) acquisition of all the materials related to the experience/practice, including the descriptive form and the attached files; (2) evaluation of the experience on the basis of the above mentioned criteria; and (3) group discussion on the results of the evaluation process, with a particular focus on the critical issues that have emerged.

Further references to the practices identified as «good» will be detailed later in chapter 5, while a full example of a «good practice» is available below in Box n. 3.

Box n. 3

«Good practices» in Media Education. An Example from the On Air Project

Alberto Parola

The experience involving students from vocational and high school institutes, is based on the design and production of an imaginary issue of a historical journal, dating back to a specific year in Italian history (i.e. 1861, which represents the symbolic year of the Italian unification) and written according to the stylistic and linguistic strategies of today's journalism.
The laboratory approach to the study of the «Italian Risorgimento» has allowed students to look into various types of newspaper text, with the aim of developing adequate writing skills to be spent in the high school leaving examination, which also includes the production of essays or texts.
This activity covers multiple factors which make it an effective ME practice, i.e.: accessing both analogical and digital sources; using different modes and techniques of group work, the creation of an editing staff; the realization of a product that could be disseminated locally; an attempt to go beyond the traditional school report style and connect with the demands of narrative journalism; the transition from the dummy to the actual layout; the opportunity provided to the students in implementing their knowledge and enabling them to become protagonists in the construction of their knowledge by adding consistent integrative information; and the possibility to work on vocabulary making messages clear and accessible eliminating the trivial use of language; and finally the opportunity to work on the acquisitions of both disciplinary and transversal competences. As stated by the teachers who designed and developed the experience, other elements which deserve attention are: the increase in mutual respect among students and the empowerment of at-risk students or students with difficulties who were given the opportunity to raise their self-esteem thanks to the improvement of their ability and skills.

The Historical Journal - Asti 1861

Section n. 1 – Summary	
Date	30th December, 2009
Name of Author	Carla Cavallotto, Patrizia Vayola
Abstract	The basic idea of this experience is the production of an issue of an imaginary daily journal dating back to a specific year in Italian history, with the aim to connect learning history to developing today's journalism techniques. The teachers selected the historical period to be considered on the basis of two main factors: on one hand, they identified a possible common topic in the curricula of the two different classes; on the other hand, they tried to focus the attention on a historical significant theme. The year 1861 was chosen as a fundamental year in the Italian history because it refers to the unification of Italy. The experience ended with publishing an historical journal (titled ASTI 1861), made up of four pages, within the newspaper LA STAMPA with a print run of 20.000, on 20th May 2004.

Section n. 2 - General information about the experience/project	
Name of the School	Istituto di Istruzione Superiore «Vittorio Alfieri»
Level of the School	☐ Primary School ☐ Junior Secondary School x Upper Secondary School
Size of the School	About 500 students
Town and Country	Asti - Italy
Topic	Italian, European and World History in XIX Century (starting from 1861).
Curriculum	History and Literacy
Media skills involved	Reading and writing skills, critical thinking
Media used	Newspaper, PC, Internet
Budget (if any)	No budget
Contact Teacher	Patrizia Vayola.
Web site	http://www.istitutovalfieri.it/ex221/modules/news/

Section n. 3 - Detailed description of the experience/project	
Time	This experience was carried out during the school year 2003/2004, from November to May, for a total amount of 20 hours with periodical classes' meetings every 15 days. Moreover, two visits to Torino and Asti have been organized for libraries and archives' search.
Target population	Two classes, one 5th grade from the IPSSCT (VB) and one 4th grade from the Lyceum (IVB).
Description of the project/experience	**1.General aims** - Connecting and integrating students' knowledge and competences to deconstruct mutual stereotypes related to the two different school types and backgrounds. - Promoting students' abilities to analyze critically the linguistic and communicative strategies of today's journalism. - Increasing students' motivation to learning history through action-research. - Promoting students' abilities to historical inquiry through experiences based on direct comparison with sources and historiography. - Developing students' capacities of writing diverse types of newspaper articles on a high level of competence (training for school leaving examination). **2. Teaching procedures and methods** First step: definition of the research area 0.Teachers' planning. 1.Elaboration of an early working hypothesis together with the students, i.e. to create a daily journal using today's journal language but reporting on historical news from the past. 2.Identification of the historical period to be considered. 3.The year 1861 identified as a historical point of reference (because events occurred in that year were common to the programs of involved classes and also because the year 1861 represents a fundamental date for Italian unification). 4.Individual research of significant events of the period under examination on an international, national and local level. 5.Collective discussion on the collected files and focus on the events in the spring of 1861, after March 17th, the proclamation's day of the Reign of Italy. Second step: Historical research 6. Subdivision into small groups (mixing the two classes' students) to start with the historical investigation on an international, national and local level. 7. Identification of the sources both as regards historiography (e.g., books available at school or in the libraries) and as regards documents available in Asti and Torino archives. 8. Collecting sources and materials useful for the research at: - Torino National library (period journal, research papers, essays); - Museum and Historical Library of the Risorgimento (publications and journals of the period); - Asti Historical Archives (journal and publications of the period - collections of town injunctions – town council minutes etc.); -Asti Consortia Library.

Description of the project/experience	Third step: outline of the journal 9. Selection of the journal's type to be created and of the daily newspaper «LA STAMPA» to publish the historical journal. This choice was due to the fact that «LA STAMPA» was familiar to the students and the teachers had positive contacts with the newspaper's editorial staff. 10. Lecture at school of a «LA STAMPA» reporter on the thematic organization of the journal and on the techniques to structure different types of articles (chronicle, interview, investigation, leading article, comments etc.). 11. Visit to the editorial office of the daily newspaper «LA STAMPA» in Turin. 12. Identification of the point of view of the journal, which was supporting the unification's process. 13. Creation of a editorial staff, one for each specific issue («Italy», «World», «National News», «Local News», «Culture»), and of an editorial committee to review articles and edit the journal (16 pages). Fourth step: article draft 14. Definition of articles' topics and subjects. 15. Individual or group drafting of various articles' types (e.g., chronicle, interview, investigation, comment, culture etc.). 16. Periodical staff meetings to verify the advancing of works and discuss/evaluate/(in case) rewrite articles. Fifth step: journal drawing up 17. Lecture at school of a «LA STAMPA» reporter on editing techniques. 18. Finding images and planning advertising to promote some products on the historical journal. 19. Definition of the newspaper's front page and layout. 20. Contacts with the local staff of the daily newspaper «LA STAMPA» to publish the historical journal. 21. Definition of a short version (4 pages) of the historical journal to be published inside the Asti's local pages in «LA STAMPA». 22. Editing of the historical journal in the local seat of «LA STAMPA». 23. Publication of the four pages of the historical journal (titled ASTI 1861) inside the local pages of the daily newspaper «LA STAMPA» on 20th May 2004, with a print run of 20.000.
Equipment needed	PC, Internet, editing programs, photo retouching software

Outcomes of the project/experience	The results of the project can be articulated in terms of processes and products. As regards processes, the following cognitive processes were promoted: understanding of historical inquiry procedures; comprehension of the need to compare different types of sources to explain a historical event; acquisition of techniques to write different types of journal articles; and also the following affective processes: development of the ability to collaborate with others; responsible cooperation to the construction of common products. Moreover, the group work allowed each pupil to contribute according his/her capacities and cognitive styles (writing texts, creating images, organizing, etc.). As regards products, an 4 pages historical journal was created and published within the local edition of the daily newspaper «LA STAMPA» on 20th May, 2004 and also a16 pages historical journal (draft version). The 4 pages product was released with a print run of 20.000. Thanks to this publication, students were very satisfied. Indeed, the publication gave them the sense of having worked for a really available product. Also the readers of the journal external to the school expressed positive evaluation on the initiative and on the quality the journal' contents.
Resources and staffing	N. 2 teachers
Challenges	The biggest challenge was to make students with very different socio-cultural backgrounds, proficient in collaborative work. The experience was based on the collaborative work of two classes with diverse curricula (vocational and high school) and was motivated by the realization that students were often indifferent or hostile between each other, because of the social and cultural differences of their background. The teachers therefore tried to solve this problem, making the students work together and facilitating the sharing of their different competences (e.g., the high school students were well up in history and philosophy as well as ancient languages, while the students of the vocational school had competences in economy and law and a higher familiarity with technologies).
Lessons learnt	The positive effects of the experience in terms of knowledge, competences, behaviour and meta-cognitive acquisitions confirmed the idea that action-research can be helpful and even necessary to provide students with significant opportunities to work on the development of disciplinary and transversal competences. Moreover, a research activity carried out with students may 'break' the traditional roles and support the construction of more significant relations, founded on collaboration and focused on learners. This allows students to feel really protagonists in the construction of their own knowledge with positive impact on motivation to study also other topics. Students improved also the relationships between each other, increasing mutual respect. At-risk students and students with difficulties increased their self-esteem thanks to the improvement of their abilities, with positive influences on their overall school progress. This is particularly true when, as in our case, students come from two different types of school, with such a different background, and work together. The experience showed them that good relationships and strong synergies between different types of competences may provide excellent opportunities for all.
Documentation	The activity was documented by the teachers through a website which contains an analytic description of the experience and the products realized: http://www.bibliolab.it/labstoria_teoria/asti1861_1.htm.

Assessment/ Evaluation System and Tools	At the end of each phase, evaluation and self-evaluation's procedures were used. The final evaluation of the activity took into account both the individual learning level and the working group level: as regards individuals, the edited articles were considered, while as regards groups, thematic consistency and graphics of the outline realized were assessed. In both cases specific evaluation's grids were provided to the students. The aimed objectives and purposes were achieved.
Transferability	A fundamental condition to repeat the experience is the will to approach action-research and collaborate with colleagues.
What's next?	----------
Context	Asti is a town in Piedmont, famous all around the world for its wines. The School Institute «Alfieri» is characterized by the presence of students with very different socio-cultural backgrounds, because its students come both from high school and vocational training.
Website of the project/ experience/ product	http://www.bibliolab.it/materiali_dida/asti1861.htm

Section n. 4 – Attached files (if any)	
Attachment n. 1	The page «Italy» • Cavour's interview about «Rome as Capital» • Garibaldi's interview about «Rome as Capital» • Article on the early negative reactions to the Italian unification in the South
Attachment n. 2	The page «World» • American Revolution: - Lincoln's interview - The chronicle of Fort Sumter assault • Abolition of Russian Serfdom • Countess of Castiglione's interview
Attachment n. 3	The page «News» • The theater season's program of the new Alfieri Theatre • New rules for the Palio • Using sulphur against downy mildew • A case of hydrophobia • Adults' evening courses • Piazza del Palio's Project
Attachment n. 4	The page «Culture» • Baudelaire's «The flowers of evil» now republished in a new 'polite' version • Two (pros and cons) reviews on Baudelaire's poems • Manet's Exhibition at the Paris' Salon • The flop of Wagner's «Tannhauser» at the Paris' Opera

Part two

Research and Studies

M. Ranieri

Chapter 4
Media Education Practices. Emerging Trends and Issues

1. Introduction

So far we focused mainly on the overall theoretical background of the On Air project, while having given an insight into the training materials produced (Box n. 2) and the examples of the tools developed during the project (Ch. 3 and Box n. 3).

In this second part of the volume, we move our attention to some of the main results of the project both in terms of research and products.

We start with the present chapter dedicated to the analysis of emerging trends of Media Education (ME) at school. It is a quantitative study carried out within the framework of the first step of the research aimed at collecting and analyzing teaching and learning practices on the media in school. Here we introduce methods and results, attempting an early analysis of the data gathered. Indeed, this collection represents a real mine of information, containing about 300 well-described practices. Therefore we can say that we have only started to approach them.

A more thematic approach to the teaching practices collected will characterize the next chapter (Ch. 5), which discusses some examples of «good practices» in the light of a range of critical topics in contemporary ME.

We would like to recall that the second step of the pedagogical research was about creating and experimenting teaching and learning content in ME. Chapters 6 and 7 are devoted to the presentation of the testing results of two studies, one centred on Internet credibility issues and critical thinking, and one on You Tube and aware consumption of the media.

Alberto Parola, Maria Ranieri, *Media Education in Action: a Research Study in Six European Countries*,
ISBN 978-88-6453-215-8 (print), ISBN 978-88-6453-222-6 (eBook), © 2010 Firenze University Press

The approach followed in these studies was qualitative in nature and essentially based on the framework outlined in Ch. 3.

Finally, this second section of the volume winds up with an analytical description of the On Air web portal and the online products that it contains. In fact, the web portal contents are delivered under an open content licence so they are freely available for everybody as stated by the Open Educational Resources movement.

We are ready now to introduce the first step of our study on the state of ME practices in schools.

2. Aims, Sample and Methods

Although the cornerstone of the pedagogical research carried out within the project was mainly orientated towards qualitative approaches, we did not underestimate the value of a quantitative perspective on the description and analysis of ME experiences and practices in schools. This was for several reasons.

First of all, a quantitative analysis of the state of ME in schools can help define policies and orient strategies. Policy issues could concern teachers' training or school equipment, while strategies could refer both to the institutional level (e.g. issues about the curriculum) and to the internal school and classroom contexts (e.g. topics to be taught, teaching and learning methods etc.).

Secondly, while there are a number of quantitative studies exploring children's and adolescents' attitudes towards media, young people's consumption practices and so on, a less investigated area is the one related to ME teaching practices[1]. What do we know about the teaching of media competences at school? What methods are used? And what about evaluation? What types of tools are teachers using to evaluate students' media learning ? Are teachers documenting their own ME activities and, if so, how?

We agree with Jacquinot, who observes that when we deal with ME we do not only need to carry out research on media but also on education[2]. We find that the focus on teaching practices in ME is still undervalued.

Thirdly, among the partners participating in the project, there were countries such as Bulgaria, Lithuania, Poland and Romania, which do not have a very long tradition in ME. Therefore an initial approach to the

[1] Among the recent research studies devoted to teachers' practices in ME we recommend a study carried out in Italy in 2009-2010 and led by R. Farné. See Farné R. (Ed.), *Media Education nella scuola dell'obbligo*, «Media Education. Studi, ricerche, buone pratiche», 1, 2, 2010, pp. 145-200.

[2] Jacquinot G., *De quelques repérages pour la recherche en education aux médias*, in P. Verniers (Ed.), *EuroMeduc. L'éducation aux médias en Europe. Controverses, défis et perspectives*, EuroMeduc, Bruxelles 2009, pp. 143-151.

current trends in these countries, especially to teaching media, may be of great value on an informative level.

All the above reasons led us to plan a quantitative study on school ME practices in the six partner countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania). The aim was to discover possible trends and issues with a specific focus on media skills and competences, teaching and learning media, relationship with the curriculum, documentation and evaluation strategies. We can summarize this briefly in one single question: «What is the current state of Media Education teaching practice in schools?». Considerations about high level policies were not within the scope of the study.

Let's now get to the 'heart' of the research. When starting an empirical study, one of the first issues to be considered is the identification of a sample. To guarantee the meaningfulness of the study the sample has to be statistically representative of the population that will be investigated. However, this is not always possible for diverse reasons such as practical barriers or lack of resources or time, and so on. Here, we are dealing with a non-probable sample. In such a case we cannot generalize the results of our research over the whole investigated population. This is the case with our research on ME school practices in the On Air project. In fact, when we were planning the study, we were immediately faced with a dilemma. On one hand, we wanted to collect information representative of the countries involved in the project, but on the other hand we aimed at gathering detailed descriptions of the experiences in order to go beyond the surface of the uses usually declared through closed questionnaires and get to the 'heart' of the experience.

As the second instance prevailed, we initially developed and tested the tool called «Case study form», the instrument we introduced in Ch. 3 as a tool for the description and documentation of practices. From the early test of the tool, it resulted that filling in such a detailed form was too demanding for the teachers due to lack of time and habit of documenting their experiences. Moreover, in some partner countries it was difficult to find ME practices in school, because in those countries ME was a rather new field.

All these issues led us to renounce to a statistically representative sample. Therefore, our conclusions do not presume to be representative. Nevertheless we believe that the survey is significant for two reasons.

First, it is one of the first attempts on a European level to build a wide collection of ME school experiences involving schools and teachers, with the aim to explore and compare them.

Secondly, we can say that the experiences we collected may have an inherent value for professional knowledge, because they reflect, in a way, the point of view of those teachers who are already engaged in ME and can contribute to the development of the field.

So, as it was not possible to create a randomly selected sample, each

partner consulted multiple databases, schools, and associations in order to find the teachers to contact .

Once the teachers wishing to cooperate were identified, each partner checked whether the ME experience was relevant to the context (i.e., the school), to the target (students aged 6-16) and to the media competences considered in the project. We also tried to give priority to experiences and projects with good documentation of the planning, development, and used material.

The next step was to collect information by using the already mentioned «Case Study Form». The items in the form were organized in a general section including: title, abstract, topic, areas of competence, and media used; and in an analytical section which included a description of objectives and purposes, teaching methods, documentation and evaluation strategies, results, challenges, lesson learnt, transferability, future development and the context of the experience

Once the forms were completed, they were published online with any related documentation and products. The documentation could be either written documents and reports or images and multimedia such as pictures, multimedia presentations, audio or video etc.

At the end of the collecting process the experiences were analyzed and evaluated in each partner country.

For the analysis of the emerging trends in practices, we adopted the following procedure: the collected experiences described in the «Case study form» were encoded according to a predefined coding system and then statistically analyzed by the SYSTAT 10.2. software. A frequency analysis was carried out and some relevant categories were compared for an early identification of the main trends.

To code the practices we considered the following categories[3]:

- media skills, i.e. reading, writing, user and critical thinking skills (more than one category could be indicated);
- media used, i.e. computers, web 1.0, web 2.0, audio and video, photography, newspapers, books, mobile phones, virtual world, other (more than one category could be indicated);
- subject areas, i.e. Arts and Media Arts, Computer Literacy, History, Geography, Languages, Life Skills, Science/Maths, Social Studies, Spirituality/Religion, and other (more than one category could be indicated);
- media issues, i.e. advertising/consumerism, digital literacy, film study/ movie-making, global media issues, health issues, history of media, how to teach media literacy, media activism, media industry/economics, music and videos, news, politics, democracy, parents, kids and media,

[3] For a more detailed description of the categories considered see Appendix n. 1 at the end of this chapter.

production/creating media, stereotyping and representation, TV and popular culture, visual literacy, other (more than one category could be indicated);
- teaching methods, which were classified as follows: receptive methods, directive methods, guided discovery approaches, collaborative methods (more than one category could be indicated);
- evaluation strategies, i.e. quantitative tests (e. g., multiple choice tests), open answer questionnaires (e.g., open-ended items, short essays and oral exhibitions), mixed strategies, not available, not specified;
- documentation tools, distinguishing between instruments to be used by the teacher, instruments to be used by the learner, instruments for the teacher and the learner;
- transferability, which refers to the judgement of the teacher about the possibility to repeat the experience in other contexts;
- criticalities, which includes the following possibilities: low budget, scarce technical skills, short time available, none or few technological devices, no cooperation between teachers, no communication with the families, no institutional support, scarce teamwork in class, low level of autonomy by the students, lack of motivation among students, lack of human resources, difficult interactions between students and teachers, difficulties in classroom management, students scarcely able to find and select information, difficulties in integrating the activities in the school curriculum, no difficulties, difficulties not specified (more than one category could be indicated);
- results, which includes the following categories: coherent with the expectations and documented, coherent with the expectations but not documented, beyond the expectation and documented, beyond the expectation but not documented, below the expectations and documented, below the expectations but not documented;
- product, which regards the possible presence of a final product.

3. Results and Discussion

As a result of the collection phase, 309 experiences were uploaded on the On Air web portal data base, All the experiences refer to the European context with some exceptions. In particular, the Belgian partner collected 23 experiences carried out in Belgium and 27 experiences in extra-European countries, the Bulgarian partner gathered 50 experiences in Bulgaria, MED 60 experiences in Italy, the Lithuanian partner 50 experiences in Lithuania, the Polish partner collected 49 experiences in Poland, and finally the Romanian partner collected 50 experiences in Romania.

Furthermore, to complete the data description we are going to present and discuss, we would like to point out that some experiences were described analytically through a detailed version of the «Case study

form», while others were briefly described by a more basic form. Belgium collected 23 fully described practices, all related to Belgium, and 27 shortly described practices, related to other countries; Bulgaria collected 25 fully described practices and 25 shortly described practices; MED (Italy) collected 36 fully described practices and 24 shortly described practices; Lithuania collected 26 fully described practices and 24 shortly described practices; Poland collected 24 fully described practices and 25 shortly described practices; end Romania collected 25 fully described practices and 25 shortly described practices.

All the collected practices were coded on the basis of the categories indicated above with the exception of the experiences gathered outside Europe. This exclusion reduced the total number from 309 to 282.
A summary of the figures mentioned so far is in the following graphs:

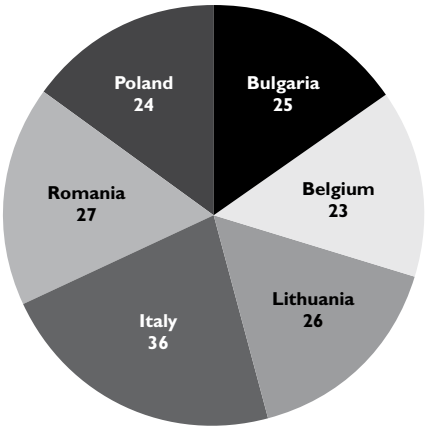

Figure 1. Total number of fully described practices (n. 161)

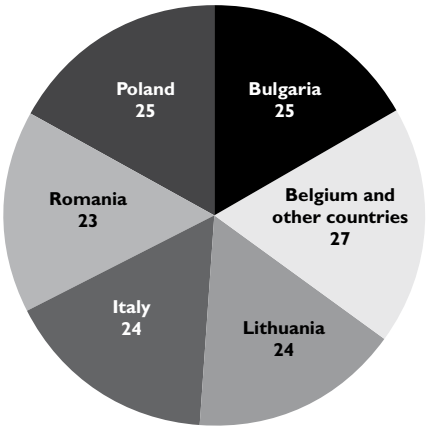

Figure 2. Total number of shortly described practices (n. 148)

The coding of practices generated a matrix of data. A frequency analysis was carried out on this data and the values of some indicators were also compared. Organizing the data according to four main perspectives proved functional for the presentation and discussion of results: (1) the national contexts and the characteristics that emerged on a local level; (2) the distribution of media skills and competences within the experiences that were analyzed; (3) the media used; (4) and the methodological and pedagogical issues that resulted from the analysis of practices.

3.1 National contexts[4]

Belgium

As already specified, only 23 experiences involve the Belgian context directly. Though a very low number for a quantitative analysis, some results deserve to be highlighted.

First, among the media skills selected as objectives of teaching/learning practices, the most frequent are critical thinking skills, appearing 18 times, and user skills, involving 17 cases. A bit less frequent are reading and writing skills, each with 10 occurrences.

The most common media used are web 1.0 and books: both are used in 7 experiences, followed by audio and video (6 cases). Seldom was the use of just the computer (1 case), of the newspaper (1 case) and mobile phone (1 case). Surprisingly there is no reference to the use of web 2.0 or simulation (i.e. virtual world), or activities based on movies or photography.

As regards subject areas, 8 experiences dealt with teaching Languages and 8 with Life Skills. Other subjects involved here are Art and Media Arts (4 times), Computer Literacy (2 times), and Social Science (1 time). Other subjects like History, Geography, Science, Maths, and Religion were not included in any project.

The most common media issues in the Belgian context are the production and creation of media (available in 6 cases), and global media issues (available in 5 cases). Some practices were about media and politics (3 cases), others on the evaluation and the analysis of stereotypes (2 cases). Other issues like the study of advertising, film study or movie making, media industry, economics, parents-kids media, and visual literacy are seldom involved (1 case each). Completely missing is the interest for common issues like TV culture, or for new important issues like media activism and health issues.

The most used teaching strategy is guided discovery (23 cases); sometimes it is joined with collaborative approaches (17 cases). Much less frequently used are the receptive (3) and directive (3) strategies.

As regards evaluation, almost half of the experiences did not include a final evaluation (10 cases); the others referred to blended strategies (9 cases), and quantitative and open tests were included only in a couple of cases Which documentation tools are used in the collected practices? Teachers mostly used diaries and observations grids (13 cases). None of the experiences adopted tools for students, while in 5 cases tools for teachers and students were included.

In 18 practices out of 23, the project was declared as transferable to other contexts, while we have no information about the other 5.

[4] All the figures and percentages related to national contexts are available below in Appendix n. 2, Table n. 1.

We now come to the criticalities found while carrying out the experience. The students had problems collecting the necessary information to do their work, then analyzing it and selecting it (6 cases). Some students were not completely motivated by the class work (3 cases), and showed a low level of autonomy. Some other critical elements were related to problems of interaction with the students (1 case) and difficulties with project management due to insufficient equipment (1 case). In the other 6 experiences no criticalities were expressly declared.

We conclude with a short reference to the results of the activity. In the majority of cases (21), the teachers declared that the results were consistent with expectations, even if only in 5 of the cases supporting documentation was available for this statement. We do not have information about the final product for 13 of the experiences, though it is evident that in 8 cases a final product was created.

Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, media skills were quite equally distributed, with a concentration on writing skills (35 cases) and less cases on user skills (20). Critical thinking skills and reading skills were in between with 30 and 28 occurrences, respectively.

Some types of media are more commonly used than others: audio and video are in 22 cases, web 1.0 technology in 16 cases, and computers in 7 cases. Types of media that are used much less are: books (2), mobile phones (2), and newspapers (1). Completely missing were the use of photos, web 2.0 or films, and the virtual world.

Art/Media Arts and Languages are the most involved subjects with 12 and 11 cases respectively. Science and Maths occur in 8 cases, Social Studies in 7, and Computer Literacy in 5, History in 4, Geography in 2 and Life Skills in 1.

Assessment and evaluation issues were by far the most common media issues with 30 occurrences. There was a great difference in number between digital literacy (7 cases) and visual literacy (3 cases). The interest in political consequences of the use of media, and the role of media between parents and children was present in only 2 cases. The following issues appeared in only 1 case: advertising/consumerism, film study/movie-making, health issues, production/creating media, stereotyping and representation, TV and popular culture.

The guided discovery (40 times) and collaborative strategies (38 times) were the most used teaching methods. The directive strategy (16 times) was less frequently used, but still more common than in other experiences, such as the Belgian one. The receptive strategy was completely missing.

In most of the cases (25) it is not expressly stated whether evaluation tools were planned or not, while the other 25 cases can be divided into 15

in which no evaluation was included, 5 cases that used blended strategies, 4 cases based on open tests and only 1 case where a quantitative test was included.

A significant part of the experience was based only on documentation for the teacher (13 cases) and for both the teacher and students (10 times). Only 2 cases were documented by students. In the other cases no documentation was included (12 cases) or we do not have information about it (13 cases).

In half of the experiences, the practice was declared easily transferable to other contexts (24 cases), while in the other half there was no judgement on transferability.

In Bulgaria, the main criticalities noted were the teachers' low technical abilities (6 cases) and the insufficient equipments (5 cases). Other critical points were the students' low motivation (3 times), and students' low autonomy or lack of it and their difficulty in finding information for the activities (2 cases). It must be noted that for most of the practices we have no information about criticalities.

In the majority of cases, teachers declared that the results were consistent with the expectations (in 11 cases it was confirmed by documents, in 33 cases it was not), and in 9 cases there was also a final product showing the students' contribution.

Italy

In Italy, as we have already said, a total of 60 practices were collected. Even though all the media skills were given sufficent attention with the exception of user skills, we can notice a high number of practices (51) that were oriented towards developing writing skills. Critical thinking skills and reading skills were similarly found frequently (respectively 34 and 33 times, while only 24 experiences also involved user skills).

Progressing with the analysis, the most used media types were audio and video (20 cases) and computers (10 cases). 8 practices were based on web 1.0, 7 on web 2.0, and another 7 on newspapers. Some experiences included photos (4) or virtual world (2). Books were used in only one activity.

Computer Literacy is the subject area on which ME courses were commonly based: 32 experiences were made during computer lessons. We can notice that Art subjects are the second most common, appearing in 10 cases. Humanities were less involved: only 6 cases were about Language, 5 about History, and 4 about Social Studies. Geography was present in only 2 cases, and Science and Maths were involved in only 1 case.

As regards media issues, the category of production/creating media was the most prominent with 29 occurrences. Other issues that were less involved include: news, politics and democracy occurring in 9 cases, the visual literacy category in 6 cases, film study/movie-making categories in 4 cases and the digital literacy, TV and popular culture categories occur

in 3 cases. Only 2 cases involved history of media, while teaching media literacy and stereotyping and representation were each in only one case.

The most used teaching strategy was the collaborative one with 54 cases, the second most used was the guided discovery strategy used in 46 cases. Less common were the receptive (7 cases) and directive approaches (2 cases).

The prevailing method of evaluation was the use of open tests employed in 18 cases. Blended strategies were used only in 4 experiences and a similar situation can be found with the quantitative evaluation used only in 3 cases. It should be noted that 17 cases did not include final evaluation tests. For the remaining 18 cases we do not have information about this item.

In 21 experiences a documentation method for both teachers and students was employed, in 15 cases the documentation was only for the students, and in 9 only for the teachers. In 7 cases no documentation was created, and in the remaining 8, no information is available on the item.

Almost all the practices were declared by the teacher as transferable (50 cases). Only in one case the experience did not seem to be transferable, while in 9 cases we have no information on this topic.

The criticalities pointed out by the teachers were the time constraints (8 cases), insufficient equipment (7 cases), and lack of technical abilities (4 cases). The following criticalities for the students were pointed out: low or no autonomy (5 cases), low motivation (5 cases) and difficulties in identifying information (3).

In Italy, as in Bulgaria, most teachers declared that the results were consistent with their expectations (in 24 cases there is a supporting documentation, in 33 cases there is not). In most of the cases, we do not know if a final product was created.

Lithuania

The Lithuanian partner collected a total amount of 50 practices, all of them from Lithuania. Looking at the media skills involved, we can notice that most of the experiences aimed at developing all media skills, with the exception of user skills, which are always less involved. Reading skills occurred 38 times, then writing skills 33 times, critical thinking skills 31 times, and user skills are present in only 15 cases.

The most common media type was web 1.0 (23 times). Web 2.0 (9 times), computers (8 times) and audio/video (7 times) were also used. Books, mobile phones and virtual world are seldom found (each category only 1 time), while photos, newspapers, and film media sources were completely missing. The most involved subject areas in the ME projects were Computer Literacy (16 times), Languages (13 times) and Art/Media Arts (12 times). Science/Maths was involved only 3 times. Integration into History (2 cases), Life Skills (2 cases), Geography (1) and Social Studies (1) was also rare.

As regards media issues, it is immediately clear how digital literacy is the main thematic area with 20 occurrences, and how advertising is the second one with 16 occurrences. 11 experiences dealt with the issue of assessment and evaluation, while 10 analyzed global media issues. The other categories were always involved less than 10 times: 6 cases focused on stereotyping and representation, 4 focused on politics and communication, and 3 on health issues. There were very few experiences about film study/movie-making (2 times), history of media (2 times), TV and popular culture (2 times), and visual literacy (2 times). Even rarer were issues like media activism (1 time) and parents, kids and media (1 time).

As in other countries, the guided discovery strategy(36 times) was the most used teaching strategy, but as opposed to other geographical contexts, there was a large presence of directive approaches (34 times). Collaborative strategies occurred 21 times, while the receptive method was used only 4 times.

Through the analysis of the evaluation strategies it can be noticed that in many cases (19) there was no evaluation at all. In 5 cases, the use of blended and qualitative strategies was noted, while in only 2 cases there were quantitative tests. We have no further information about the remaining 19 cases.

In half of the practices (25), the documentation included was for the teacher; sometimes the experience used documentation tools for both the teacher and the students (8 times), and very rarely for the students only (3 times). There are also several practices for which we have no information about documentation (17 times).

There is also little information about transferability. From the analysis, we learn that in 15 cases out of 50 the project was considered completely transferable by the teacher, but in the remaining 35 this information was not given.

The main criticalities discovered during the implementation of the experience regard technical aspects, particularly, teachers' low technical abilities: this problem occurs 7 times. Some teachers complained about the limited time available (2 cases), and about difficulties in classroom management (3 cases). As regards students, teachers pointed out that pupils have difficulties in identifying information (4 cases), and have a low sense of belonging to the class (2 cases). In one case the low level of student's autonomy was pointed out. Overall, it must be emphasized that reflection on criticalities was not carried out very analytically.

Almost all the teachers declared that the experience reached results consistent with the initial expectations (41 cases with supporting documentation and 6 without); we have no information about the presence of a final product in 40 cases.

Poland

For Poland we have a total of 49 cases. The most common media skills in the collected experiences were reading (35 times), followed by writing (28 times), and critical thinking (18 cases), while only 14 cases were identified for user skills.

Web 1.0 was the most used media (24 times), followed by audio and video (12 times), and by computers (9 times). The other categories occur less frequently, similarly to the other countries.

Computer Literacy and Languages were the most involved subjects in ME courses with 19 occurrences each. The following subjects occurred much less frequently: Art/Media Arts (6 times), Science/Maths (2 times), Life Skills (1 time), Social Studies (1 time) and Spirituality/Religion (1 time). Geography and History were not involved.

Among the more common media issues in Poland, we find education in digital literacy which occurred 22 times. Interest for other subjects occurred only in 1 or 2 cases for each category except for advertising/consumerism with 7 cases.

Poland's situation is similar to Lithuania's. We registered a significant approach to directive strategies (28 times), alone or in combination with the guided discovery approach (28 times), and the collaborative approach (26 times). The receptive strategy was present in only 1 case.

Looking at the evaluation methods, we note that in many cases there was no evaluation of the activity (17 cases), or no available information (23 cases). 6 experiences were based on blended strategies, and 3 on qualitative tests.

As regards the documentation activity, in most of the practices, documentation tools were absent (14 cases), or the information is not available (16 cases). In the rest of the experiences, the use of tools for the teacher prevailed (10 cases), in other cases, there was also documentation available for students (5 cases) and documentation for both teachers and students (4 cases).

In 22 practices the experience was considered transferable, for the other case studies no information is available at all (27 cases).

The main criticalities that were expressed are: lack of equipment (4 times), difficulties of students in identifying information (4 times), and students' low motivation (3 times). In 12 cases, there were no criticalities, while in 19 cases information is not available.

Even in Poland almost all the teachers affirmed having achieved results consistent with the expectations (44 times).

For the majority of experiences (45) it was not declared whether a final product was created.

Romania

Even in Romania, attention was quite uniformly focused on the three media skills represented by writing skills (38 times), critical thinking skills (34 times), and reading skills (25 times), while user skills were less involved (17 times).

As regards media types, Romania was mostly concerned with web 1.0 (21 times), and audio/ video (13 times). The following categories occurred less than 10 times: web 2.0 (5 times), newspapers (4 times), virtual world (3 times), and computers (2 times). Other media were used only once, or never.

Among the most involved subject areas we find Languages (16 times) and Computer Literacy (15 times). Then we find Social Studies (7 times) and other subjects like Art/Media Arts (4 times), History (3 times), Science/ Maths (3 times), and Geography (2 times). The other subject areas were not involved.

As regards media issues, many practices focused on the production and creation of media (26 times). Other issues were assessment and evaluation (8 times), digital literacy (7 times), and advertising/consumerism (4 times). The other issues were rare or totally absent.

The most common teaching strategy was the guided discovery strategy (49 times), which often occurred together with the collaborative strategy (44 times), and rarely with the directive one. The receptive strategy was present in only one case.

Among the evaluation methods, we find the blended strategies in 15 cases, followed by the open tests in 6 cases, and quantitative tests in 3 cases. Furthermore, there were 11 cases without evaluation and the other 15 where this element was not specified.

Documentation was used in more than half of the experiences: for the students in 11 cases, for the teachers in 5 cases, and for both in 7 cases. In the other experiences documentation was absent (27 cases) or we have no information about it (5 cases).

Among the practices collected in Romania it is possible to notice that 31 of these are considered transferable in other contexts, while there is no information for the remaining 19 cases.

The low budget (6 times), insufficient equipment (6 times) and the low collaboration among colleagues (4 times) were frequent criticalities. Furthermore, there was low or absent students' autonomy and motivation (3 times) and there were difficulties in identifying information.

Finally, in Romania almost all the teachers affirmed having achieved consistent results with the expectations, but none were documented (42 times). It can be noticed that in 16 cases there was a final product showing the students' contribution.

3.2 Media skills and competences

So far, we have given a descriptive picture of the national contexts with a few considerations and comments. In this section and below, we will try to reflect on the data by exploring some key questions and attempting to find possible connections.

We will start our data analysis related to media skills with the following questions in mind: can we find common trends in media competences and skills irrespective of the geographical context? Is there a connection between the media skills considered in the collected practices and teaching methods? Is there a connection between media skills and subject areas? In other terms, are there subjects that are more suitable than others to teach certain media skills? Furthermore, is there a link between media competence and a specific media issue? Does focus on a particular competence or skill create specific criticalities?

To answer these questions, we took into account the occurrences of media skills in relation to the following categories: countries, teaching methods, media used, subject areas, media issues, and criticalities.

First of all, we noticed that, irrespective of the geographical area, use awareness skills, which occurred 107 times out of the total 282 cases, are the least frequent. The only exception was the result from Belgium, with 17 cases out of 23. Other media skills were quite common, with percentages generally over 50% in almost every country, and writing skills percentages were over 70% in Italy, Bulgaria, and Romania[5].

Further in the analysis, it is interesting to examine the frequency distribution of media skills within the single teaching methods, by considering the total number of the occurrences of each media skill irrespective of the geographical-national context. This element may be interesting for a reflection on the question: «Are there any teaching methods that teachers consider more fit than others to develop certain skills?». Indeed, as can be seen from the gathered data, media skills are quite equally distributed among the teaching methods[6]. Therefore, we may not infer a relation between the type of skill and the type of teaching method used. In any case it should be noted that, no matter what media skill was involved, the guided discovery approach was the most used, followed by the collaborative methods. Furthermore, the directive and the receptive approaches were the least used. This is not an unusual result and it is coherent with the pedagogical ME tradition which has always opted for active teaching methods[7].

[5] See below Appendix n. 2, Table n. 1.
[6] See below Appendix n. 2, Table n. 2.
[7] Cf. Felini D., *Pedagogia dei media. Questioni, percorsi e sviluppi*, La Scuola, Brescia 2004.

As regards the media used, the distribution of the results does not appear very diversified[8]. The frequency of computer use together with web 1.0 and web 2.0, was the highest, even though 2.0 tools were less used than the 'old style' technologies. Then the audio and video category follows, which includes all media using either video and/or audio (e.g. radio, web TV, etc.).

If we only consider computers, the most frequent media skills were writing and reading, while user skills were present in few cases. An opposite situation can be found in the audio and video category, where user skills were more common than others.

As regards the other categories (photography, books, mobile phones and newspapers), they all have a rather low frequency (less than 15) compared to the other media skills. For example, books and newspapers, media traditionally close to ME, have a 4% to 8% frequency, and mobile phones, new and popular instruments, have an even lower percentage of frequency. Despite the fact that young people are using mobile phones more and more, we noticed scarce attention toward this medium and the media issues related to it.

The distribution of media skills within the different subject areas is slightly more varied, and provides some data that deserves to be analyzed[9]. The data shows that three subject areas were more involved than others no matter what media skills were considered: Computer Literacy, Languages, and Art. The recurrence of ME activities in language teaching is not a surprise, and it is coherent with the well established ME practice of including the study of media in the language curriculum, especially the skills of writing and reading media[10]. On the contrary, the frequency of ME activities in a subject area such as Computer Studies, even if not particularly surprising, casts some doubts on the way the study of media is perceived. In fact, the integration of ME activities related to reading and writing media in, for example, Computer Studies suggests that an instrumental approach towards media analysis is still dominant[11].

It is also interesting to mention Social Studies, not so much for the impact of this subject, which is still low, but for the user skills, which are more frequent than others, in this subject. This reveals the particular attention which social subjects give to user skills and competences.

Another point deserving attention is the relation between media skills and media education issues[12]. By analyzing data, we immediately notice that assessment and digital literacy are the most common media issues,

[8] See below Appendix n. 2, Table n. 3.
[9] See below Appendix n. 2, Table n. 3.
[10] See for example Masterman L., *Teaching the Media*, Comedia, London 1985.
[11] Cf. Buckingham D., *Media education. Literacy, learning and contemporary culture*, Polity Press-Blackwell Publishing, London 2003.
[12] See below Appendix n. 2, Table n. 3.

independently from the media skills. While the frequency of assessment issues requires further analysis, we can make some observations about the frequency of digital literacy. Briefly, with the term digital literacy we mean the capacity and skills to find, evaluate and create information, and cooperate using digital technologies. A first consideration on this topic is that today digital literacy is getting international attention. The European Union introduced it in 2006[13], within the framework of key competences, and this could explain the high frequency of this category as opposed to the others. A second consideration regards the high frequency of Computer Studies compared to other subjects; a consequence of this is the fact that digital literacy was among the most common topics.

Another point of interest is the high number in the «production/creation of media» category, especially in relation to writing skills and critical thinking skills. In some way, the idea that production activities are essential for the development of critical understanding of media seems to have got through.

We shall now consider the major criticalities that emerged during the implementation of the experience[14]. For this purpose, we point out that while a special category about criticalities was included for the fully described practices, for the shortly described practices teachers were asked to describe criticalities among other things. This explains why the «not available» category received the highest results. At the same time, we want to emphasize that teachers often reported just a couple or no criticalities. This aspect should deserve further investigation. What does it mean? Were the practices carried out without problems, or was there no real reflection during and after the process? Should we consider that «everything went well», or was there no real evaluation of the activities during and after the process?

Anyway, even with the scarce information available, we realize that most of the criticalities that emerged during the process, regarded the students. They found difficulties in retrieving and connecting to the online information requested to accomplish the task and create the final product. It is, therefore, not a coincidence that this criticality emerged mostly in practices oriented towards the development of critical thinking and writing skills.

One more criticality was poor or lack of equipment, such as computers, Internet connections, cameras and video cameras.

[13] European Union, *Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 18 December 2006 on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning*, «Official Journal of the European Union» (2006/962/EC), L394/10-18, http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/lifelong_learning/c11090_en.htm.

[14] See below Appendix n. 2, Table n. 3.

3.3 Media used

We shall now focus on the frequency of the media used in the teaching practices collected, considering this data in relation to four categories: media issues, transferability, criticalities and documentation[15]. To what extent is a type of media chosen rather than another when dealing with a certain topic? Which specific criticalities derive from the choice of certain media? Can an experience be more or less transferable depending on the type of media used? Can the use of certain media as opposed to others facilitate the documentation of the process?

First of all, we notice that the use of digital media, such as computers and web 1.0 and 2.0, corresponds to the focuses on issues such as digital literacy or the creation and production of media. This result is essentially coherent with the fact that digital media renders the creation of media easier and more powerful. At the same time, we may also observe that the scarce use of traditional media corresponds to a low interest towards some classic ME subjects. Topics, such as analysis of stereotypes and representations, which have always been relevant in the history of ME, were completely missing in the practices analyzed. There was also little interest towards 'media activism' or health.

This seems to suggest that the preponderance of so-called digital media have shifted the attention to production/creation, and moved the interest away from other culturally relevant ME topics. This aspect should be further investigated.

As regards criticalities, even though – as said before - the data is very limited, there were no peculiar issues with any specific media.

Nevertheless, we may note how the use of computers and the web may be affected by the lack of necessary equipment. Another criticality can be the teachers' low technical ability. Similarly, students had problems in finding and organizing online information.

Sometimes there was very little time, especially for the longer experiences such as the creation of a short or long movie.

As emerges from the data, in most cases projects were declared transferable to other contexts. The use of a media or another does not seem to cause particular consequences. Even in the case of computer or Internet use, which are categories afflicted by lack of equipment, there were no consequences on transferability.

Is there a connection between the type of media and documentation? Generally, we may observe that, irrespective of the media, most of the practice documentation was created by the teacher. In other terms, it means that the documentation activity depended on the teachers, who, thanks

[15] See below Appendix n. 2, Table n. 4.

to diaries or grids, noted down the experience by describing the process. There were few student documentation tools or proof of their work.

3.4 Pedagogical issues

This last paragraph focuses on the pedagogical dimension, particularly on the relationship between the teaching approaches that emerged from the practices collected, and the other parameters. Key questions of our analysis were: Does a connection between teaching approaches and subject areas exist? Does the study of a particular media issue come with the use of a particular teaching strategy? Does the adoption of a certain teaching strategy cause specific criticalities?

To face these problems, we confronted the teaching methods with some categories such as: subject area, media issue, and criticalities[16].

We first analyzed the relationship between teaching strategies and subjects. From the data we may notice that generally, the guided discovery approach was the most used irrespective of the subject area, while the receptive strategy was the least used. Nevertheless, some 'associations' were more frequent than others. For example, guided discovery strategies were more frequent in the Computer Literacy area, followed by Languages and Art/Media Arts area, with a frequency of 68, 54 and 34 occurrences respectively. There were 16 occurrences for Science/Maths and Social Studies, 8 regarded Life Skills, and 6 concerned Geography.

The collaborative approach was also quite frequent. Even in this case, Computer Literacy has a high frequency number with 72 occurrences. Then we find Languages 44 times, Art/Media Arts 29 times, Social Studies 16 times, History 13 times, and Science/Maths 10 times.

Directive methods occurred 31 times in the Computer Literacy category, 26 times in Languages, 20 times in Arts/Media Arts, and 9 times in the Science/Maths, while History, Social Studies and Life Skills were used respectively 5, 5 and 4 times. Lastly, the receptive strategy occurred 6 times in Computer Literacy, 3 times in Languages and Life Skills, and 2 times in Arts/Media Arts. It was used only once in History and Social Studies, and never in Geography, Science/Maths, Social Studies, and Spirituality/Religion.

Another dimension deserving attention is the relation between teaching strategies and media issues. Topics such as producing/creating media, assessment and evaluation, and digital literacy seem to fit with the guided discovery approach. The same can be observed in categories like advertising/consumerism and news, politics, and democracy.

Even in the collaborative approach the issues with highest frequencies are producing/creating media, assessment and evaluation, and digital literacy.

[16] See below Appendix n. 2, Table 5.

Surprisingly, in the directive approach we can find high numbers of practices focused on digital literacy. This could bring to mind an idea of digital literacy limited to technical and procedural aspects, which would explain the focus on high structured teaching strategies, like the directive approach.

Briefly, we can say that, independently from the media issue, the most recurring strategies were the guided discovery approach, and secondly, the collaborative methods. Attention on digital literacy seems to give importance to the directive strategy, giving the idea of a technical view of that literacy.

We shall now consider the possible connection between teaching strategies and criticalities. We can notice that the main difficulties for the students in the guided discovery approach, were identifying information for the development of the project, and their low level of autonomy in planning and managing the work. The biggest criticalities in the management of the experience by the teacher, were inadequate technological equipment and low technical skills.

In the collaborative strategy, the worst criticalities were again the students' difficulty to find and select information, and the inadequacy of the available technical equipment. It was also difficult to manage time. Other issues that emerged, on the students' side, were lack of autonomy and low motivation.

The students' difficulty to find information and the teachers' low technical skill can also be found in the directive strategy.

We shall not dwell on the receptive strategy due to the low number of cases using this category.

We would like to conclude with a quick look at transferability and documentation. Once again, teachers were confident to transfer their experience to other contexts, and independently from the teaching strategy adopted, the creation of documentation was mainly managed by the teacher. Nevertheless, in many cases there was no documentation at all.

4. Conclusion

We shall close this chapter with a few considerations on the results we have discussed so far, attempting to summarize the main issues and to draw some conclusions.

A first interesting point regards competence areas. Among the typical objectives of the ME practices, the most frequent ones were related to media writing and reading skills, while skills related to media consumption (user skills) were the least frequent ones irrespective of the specific national contexts. This fact seems to suggest that, on one hand, ME gets more feedback when it is combined with the development of skills that are more easily referable to the traditional curriculum. On the other hand, it could be indicative of the teachers' difficulty to structure teaching activities aimed

at fostering aware consumption of media, a difficulty that should/could be overcome by developing more tools in this less familiar area of ME.

A second point that deserves attention is the fact that certain types of media were clearly prevalent: computers and web 1.0/2.0 seem to dominate school media practices. In order to reflect on this point and its implications we should also mention another element related to the large number of ME practices oriented to the production of media, which is probably a consequence of the proliferation of user-friendly digital tools for media creation. At the same time, it should also be pointed out that classic ME topics, like analysis of stereotypes and of representation or the study of forms of media like cinema, are almost completely lacking.

We believe that the prevalence of ME activities oriented towards production accompanied by the almost total absence of attention towards the classic issues posed in ME should make us reflect. Considered on its own, the first point could, to a certain extent, be interpreted positively. It could mean that the idea of ME as totally and exclusively oriented to the critical analysis and understanding of media has been completely surpassed. For a long time it was believed that the main objective of ME was to demystify the ideological dimensions of media representations, thus developing critical sense. This preference for critical analysis led to a substantial devaluation of «production-creation» activities, because considered of no pedagogical value. As Cappello explains,

> [...] animated by a general frankfurtian suspicion of the deceptive pleasures of popular culture, media educators have long believed that any kind of media production in the classroom was a form of 'technicism', of 'cultural reproduction', of 'deference and conformity' to dominant media practices[17].

This view has been widely criticized[18] by highlighting the importance of media in the lives of young people and children:

> [...] children do not experience the media as devices for conveying meaning, but rather as symbolic resources providing images, fantasies and opportunities for imaginative self-expression and play[19].

It is in the light of this argument that the presence of a high number of production activities can be interpreted positively.

[17] Cappello G., *Beyond the critical vs. creative debate. New challenges for media education in the digital age*, «Form@re», 70, September 2010, http://formare.erickson.it/wordpress/en/category/2010/n-70-settembre.

[18] See, for example, Cappello G., *Nascosti nella luce. Media, minori e media education*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2009; Livingstone S., Haddon S. (Eds.), *Kids Online. Opportunities and Risks for Children*, Polity Press, Bristol, UK 2009; Buckingham D., *Media education. Literacy, learning and contemporary culture*, Polity Press-Blackwell Publishing, London 2003.

[19] Cappello G., *op. cit.*, 2010.

However, this same fact accompanied by the lack of attention for traditional issues like analysis of representations raises some doubts. It seems as though ME practices within the school context have all been limited to «practical production». But practical production on its own is not enough. It is only by joining theory to practice, critical analysis to media production that the dangers - which are still lurking - of limiting activities to simple technical training, can be avoided.

Two more elements stand out in the data collected. The first one regards the scarce attention given to documentation of ME activities carried out in class. We know that documentation is far from being simple and that it presents the teacher with a real challenge: how can a teaching experience be described? How can a multidimensional and complex activity like teaching be translated into words? As Castoldi[20] observes, finding appropriate answers to these questions constitutes a challenge which comes up in relation to any practical knowledge and ME knowledge is a practical knowledge. At the same time, if it is deemed necessary to enhance and improve research around practices, documentation becomes just about inevitable, especially in the perspective pursued in the On Air project and inspired by action research. And yet, the documentation field is still weak. We have noticed such a weakness on different occasions. As explained above, in the phase of collecting practices, the structured form was deemed too analytical, requiring so to speak «too many words/details». So we had quite some difficulty in recovering the number of the forms we required and we also had to prepare a shorter version. In the analysis phase we found that very often teachers had not documented the experience and, presumably, had not analyzed it either. After all, even information in the forms about the critical issues that emerged during the process of the activity is not much.

Let us finally consider assessment. Most of the collected experiences did not plan any tools explicitly and consciously aimed at assessing students' learning. A kind of unawareness of the importance of a proper assessment of what students' learned seems to prevail. On the contrary, it is necessary to create assessment tools to 'measure' students' results, in order to be able to evaluate the effectiveness of educational material and activities. In some way, we are all interested in carrying out learning activities that are effective, but few focus on the problem of assessment and the construction of adequate tools. As Bisogno[21] reminds us to consider documentation as «knowing what was done to be able to do», we ask to consider assessment as «evaluating carefully what was done to be able to do better». In this field there is still a long way to go[22].

[20] Castoldi M., *Didattica generale*, Mondadori, Milano 2010.
[21] Bisogno P., *Il futuro della memoria – Elementi per una teoria della documentazione*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 1995.
[22] Cf. Hobbs R., *Empowerment and protection: Complementary strategies for digital and media literacy in the United States*, «Form@re», 70, September 2010b, http://formare.erickson.it/wordpress/en; and Jacquinot G., *op. cit.*, 2009, pp. 143-151.

Appendix n. 1
Description of the categories used in the coding phase

Here we present in more detail the categories we used to code the information collected about the ME practices carried out in schools in the six European countries involved in the On Air project (i.e., Belgium, Bulgaria, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania). Our aim is to highlight the meanings of these categories and to justify their relevance for our research purposes.

Media skills
It has been considered relevant to start with an overall picture of media skills registered in the completed forms, both at a national and European level to verify the possible underestimation of specific skills and propose specific ME actions. The first factor taken into account was then the media skills promoted by the project. This category was divided into four different sub-categories, each one referring to the media skills included in media competence as a whole: reading skills, writing skills, user skills, and critical thinking skills[1]. Obviously, one single experience could involve more than one type of media skills, and that was noted during the coding process.

Media used
The second category considered was the type of media used in the project. It is not easy to create a representative classification of media. There are many issues to be considered, which are also complicated by the current phenomenon of convergence[2]:
1) Why distinguish between old and new media? Or mass media from digital media? 2) How should digital technology be considered? 3) Should we distinguish between media intended as communicative products (i.e. photography and comics) and the technological tools intended as communicative platforms (i.e. computers and the Internet)?
In general, we decided to adopt a wide definition for the term «media», including information and communication technologies as socio-cultural mediation tools. We opted for a loose classification able to include the several types of media used in the various experiences. Therefore we considered the following categories:
- Computers: to classify experiences based exclusively on the use of computers as instruments for the production of multi-media contents or writing;
- Web 1.0: to classify experiences based on the use of computers and first generation web for communication, production, and online distribution of information (chat, web forum);
- Web 2.0: to classify experiences based on the use of computers and second generation web tools for online production, communication, and distribution of information (blogs, wikis, skype, podcasts, You Tube, social networks);
- Audio and Video: to classify experiences based on the analysis and/or production and/or distribution of video and audio contents (radio, TV, video, video reports, movies, and cinema);
- Photography: to classify the experiences based on the analysis and/or production of photographic material;
- Books: to classify experiences based on the use of books;
- Mobile Phones: to classify the experiences based on the use of mobile phones;

[1] For a definition of these media skills see Ch. 1 and 2.
[2] Jenkins H., *Convergence Culture*, New York University Press, New York and London 2006.

⏩Virtual world: to classify the experiences based on the use of virtual world;
⏩Other: to classify the experiences based on the use of media not included in the above categories.
Even in this case, one single experience could involve more than one type of media, and that was noted during the coding process.

Subject areas
The third considered category was the subject areas involved in the projects. This element was relevant for two reasons: on one hand, the data collected on this item could give some insight on the level of integration of ME within the school curriculum; on the other it allows us to consider different strategies for a better integration of ME in schools.
Eleven different categories were defined, i.e. Art/Media Arts, Computer Literacy, History, Geography, Languages, Life Skills, Science/Maths, Social Studies, Spirituality/Religion, and other.
One single experience could involve more than one type of subject area, and that was noted during the coding process.

Media issues
The fourth category included the media issues faced during the experience, that it the media related topics involved during the learning activities. Obviously, almost any theme can be seen from the ME perspective. However, there are some topics and issues that fit ME better like: analysis of stereotypes, citizenship, history of media, and so on.
In this case the categories were carefully selected on the basis of current literature, and through a comparison with many other national and international projects involving ME. Below we present the selected categories, trying to explain the reasons for the selection and the meaning behind them:
⏩Advertising/Consumerism: media are notoriously full of advertising and commercial communication, that propose lifestyles based on consumerism. A relevant theme for ME is the promotion of critical awareness towards commercial contents, developing individuals' capacity of autonomously decoding commercial messages.
⏩Assessment and Evaluation: over the last years, interest in assessment and evaluation of media competence and skills has considerably increased[3]. Even if it is not easy to design and implement instruments and tools to evaluate such a complex subject as ME, it is fundamental to develop appropriate tools at least for their use in a formal context in schools.
⏩Digital Literacy: media digitalization over the last ten years has introduced a new literacy: digital literacy[4]. Experts wonder about the need of adding the new literacy besides media literacy. As this topic is still debated upon, we wanted to insert a specific category referring not only to the acquisition of basic skills in the use of digital technologies, but also to the critical understanding of information.
⏩Film Study/Movie-making: the analysis and study of audio and visual languages, on one side, and the conception and creation of audio-video products on the other;

[3] See, for example, Celot P., Tornero J. M. P., *Study on Assessment Criteria for Media Literacy Levels. Final Report*, Bruxelles 2009.
[4] Cf. Calvani et al., *La competenza digitale nella scuola. Modelli e strumenti per valutarla e svilupparla*, Erickson, Trento 2010; and Tornero J. M. P., Paredes O., Simelio N., *Media literacy in Europe. From promoting digital literacy to the audiovisual media services directive*, «Form@re», 70, September 2010, in Internet: http://formare.erickson.it/wordpress/en/category/2010/n-70-settembre.

both aspects have an important place in ME. From a historical point of view, until the 90's the critical/analytical attitude was predominant. However, in the following years, due to the potential of digital media, the creative production dimension became increasingly important.

⏩Global Media Issues: in an increasingly interdependent and complex global environment, media has a fundamental role in making people communicate beyond geographical borders and interact with contents and people in cross-cultural contexts. New themes appear in ME like: intercultural communication, new identities, media and global economies, and so on.

⏩Health Issues: health education is a favourite subject in the American tradition. Movies, TV series, commercials propose non neutral representations of the human body and of the relations between individuals and their identity, and individuals and their attitudes towards other people, food, alcohol, and smoking. Media is very powerful in transmitting these representations, and therefore health issues deserve great attention.

⏩History of Media: learning about media also means learning about the history of media. History is fundamental to understand the characteristics of media, their evolution, the social need it were addressed to in a specific period. For example, it is important to know that European totalitarian regimes used radio as a means of propaganda. Or that the Internet was created for military use. This knowledge does not aim at 'demonizing' a specific media rather than another, but helps to understand that technology is not neutral.

⏩How to Teach Media Literacy: this dimension refers to the various educational approaches that are being used in teaching media. There is not only one single approach in so far as different traditions consider different aspects. This aspect could be significant for the teacher's training.

⏩Media Activism: with this expression we refer to the use of media and communication technologies to support social movements and/or to lobby the government and institutions in order to influence politics towards media and communication. Internet expansions render many initiatives using media for social and political campaigns possible. Websites, blogs, social networks have all become tools for important political communication projects by the people.

⏩Media Industry/Economics: the analysis and study of media production, and of the relation between media and the economy, together are a classical topic of ME. Understanding media production and the economic impact of the media industry, represents a key point for the critical knowledge of media themselves.

⏩Music/Music Videos: the study of music language and grammar is also a field of ME. Music education is aesthetic education, good taste education and represents the culture of artistic pleasure.

⏩News, Politics, Democracy: we can say that the ultimate aim of ME is to 'nurture' a responsible citizen, able to actively participate in the social and political life of his/her community. Being able to read news, understand the modern events occurring in their main social and political aspects, are basic elements of education for an aware participation in democracy.

⏩Parents, Kids and Media: the school is obviously not the only educational institution for ME. Besides school there is the family which should play a vital role in ME, especially if we consider that most media consumption by the new generation is made at home and not at school. Sadly, parents are not often able to occupy this role at home, and then the school is called in to intervene in preparing training courses addressed to families or adult learners on ME themes.

⏩Production/Creating Media: the productive/creative dimension has obtained time after time more importance in ME, reaching the same level of the critical dimension. The basic idea is that in order to critically understand media it is important not only

to analyze and deconstruct media products, but also reconstruct them in a cyclical process: it is in this deconstructing/rebuilding of media that a person may reach a deep understanding of the mechanisms behind ME.
⏩Stereotyping and Representation: the analysis of stereotypes and representations is characteristically part of ME. Through the decoding of media text, the deconstruction of representations, the demystification of clichés on topics like gender, ethnic groups, and social classes, ME has always worked on stereotypes and prejudices to foster openness towards others and to develop critical attitudes towards the media.
⏩TV and Popular Culture: thanks to cultural studies, the distinction between high culture and low culture has been reduced, and the study of the expression of popular culture depicted on TV entered ME.
⏩Visual Literacy: we live in a cultural and symbolic society populated everyday by images requiring specific reading skills to interpret the visual messages and contents. Visual literacy refers to the capacity of 'reading' images as if they were texts full of meanings to be decoded and critically understood.
Even in this case, it was noticed that one single experience could involve more than one type of category, and it was noted during the coding process.

Teaching methods
The fifth dimension refers to the specific teaching methods or approaches used in the experiences that we collected and analyzed. As is commonly known, there are several taxonomies of teaching strategies. To make the reading of data easier, we decided to opt for four large categories, directly from Clark[5]. The representative categories are the following:
⏩Receptive approaches: based on the transmission of information and knowledge from the teacher to the students like the traditional lecture;
⏩Directive approaches: refer to models based on short lessons, progressing from simple to complex, and followed by exercises with corrective feedback. This typology includes both tutorials and demonstrations.
⏩Guided discovery approaches: promote problem based learning in situated and experiential contexts, valorise mistakes and errors as instruments to develop knowledge and skills. Methods that can belong to this typology are: case studies, discussions, educational games, experiments, multimedia instruction, role playing, simulation etc.
⏩Collaborative approaches: based on learning in small groups that are engaged in solving problems (problem based), or planning a project (project based). These approaches need a good level of autonomy and competence of the participating students. This category enlists methods like: discussion, group instruction, and peer teaching.
Note that one single experience could be based on multiple approaches, and that was noted during the coding process.

Evaluation strategies
This section describes the planned strategies for evaluating students' work and performance. The section is articulated in the following categories:
⏩Quantitative tests: refer to experiences based on the use of quantitative tests such as multiple choice tests and true/false question tests.
⏩Open tests: refer to the experiences based on the use of tests such as open answer questionnaires, essays, oral examinations, interviews.

[5] Clark R. C., *Four architectures of learning*, «Performance Improvement», 39, 10, 2000, pp. 31-77.

⏩Mixed Strategies: refer to the experiences based on the mixed use of multiple choice tests and open answer questionnaires.
⏩Not available: refers to the experiences that did not plan a final evaluation.
⏩Not specified: refers to the experiences where no information about evaluation is available.

Documentation
It refers to how the experience was documented. In particular we registered whether it was documented, how, and by whom through the following categories:
⏩Instruments for the teacher: refers to the experiences, which only include documents for the teacher, i.e. activity journal describing the preparation of materials and the activities, evaluation tables, schedule plan, etc.
⏩Instruments for the learner: refers to the experiences, which only include documentation instruments for learners, i.e. conceptual maps, personal diaries, work plan.
⏩Instruments for the teacher and the learner: indicates all the experiences, which include documentation instruments for learners and teachers.
⏩No documentation available: includes experiences where no documentation was provided.
⏩Not specified: includes experiences where documentation was not specified.

Transferability
In this category we wanted to register whether the teacher considered the experience transferable to other classrooms or contexts. It is fundamental to observe that it was only a subjective evaluation by a teacher, without any scientific value regarding the reliability of the experience. We only registered the teachers' perceptions about the value of their practices in terms of transferability.

Criticalities
This category refers to the difficulties encountered by the teachers throughout the development of the experience. The difficulties pointed out were divided into seventeen different categories: low budget; low technical skills; short time available; none or very few technological devices; no cooperation between teachers; no communication with families; no support from the government; scarce teamwork in class; students unable to act independently; lack of motivation among the students; lack of human resources; difficult interactions between students and teachers; difficult classroom management; students scarcely able to find and select information; difficulties in linking the workshops to the school curriculum; no difficulties; difficulties not specified.
Note that a single experience could have more than one difficulty, and that was noted during the coding process.

Results
This dimension refers to the evaluation made by the teacher on the results and the possible related documentation. It included the following categories:
⏩Coherent with the expectations and documented: refers to experiences considered by the teacher as coherent with the initial expectations and which have supporting documentation.
⏩Coherent with the expectations but not documented: refers to experiences considered by the teacher as coherent with the initial expectations, but without the supporting documentation.
⏩Beyond the expectations and documented: refers to the experiences considered by the teacher beyond the initial expectations and supporting documentation was given.

- Beyond the expectations but not documented: refers to the experiences whose results were considered by the teacher beyond the initial expectations but not documented.
- Below the expectations and documented: refers to the experiences whose results were considered by the teacher below the initial expectations and supporting documentation was given.
- Below the expectations and not documented: refers to the experiences whose results were considered by the teacher below the initial expectations and supporting documentation was not available.

Product

The last category regarded the final product. We tried to verify and code the following information: (1) whether a final product was realized or not; (1) whether it was accessible and showed the students' work; (3) whether it was accessible but did not show the students' work.

*Tab. 1 – Countries and media skills, media used, subject areas, media issues, teaching stategies, evaluation, transferability, documentation, criticalities, results and product **

		Belgium**	Bulgaria	Italy	Lithuania	Poland	Romania	Total
Media skills***	Critical thinking	18 (78%)	30 (60%)	34 (57%)	31 (62%)	18 (37%)	34 (68%)	165 (59%)
	Reading	10 (43,5%)	28 (56%)	33 (55%)	38 (76%)	35 (71%)	25 (50%)	169 (60%)
	Writing	10 (43,5%)	35 (70%)	51 (85%)	33 (66%)	28 (57%)	38 (76%)	195 (69%)
	User	17 (74%)	20 (40%)	24 (40%)	15 (30%)	14 (29%)	17 (34%)	107 (38%)
Media Used	Computer	1 (4,5%)	7 (14%)	10 (17%)	8 (16%)	9 (18%)	2 (4%)	37 (13%9
	Web 1.0	7 (30%)	16 (32%)	8 (13%)	23 (46%)	24 (49%)	21 (42%)	97 (34%)
	Web 2.0	-	-	7 (12%)	9 (18%)	-	5 (10%)	21 (7,5%)
	Audio & video	6 (26%)	22 (44%)	20 (33%)	7 (14%)	12 (24,5%)	13 (26%)	80 (28%)
	Photo	-	-	4 (7%)	-	-	1 (2%)	5 (2%)
	Film	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Books	7 (30%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)	15 (5%)
	Mobile phone	1 (4,5%)	2 (4%)	-	1 (2%)	-	-	4 (1,5%)
	Newspaper	1 (4,5%)	1 (2%)	7 (12%)	-	1 (2%)	4 (8%)	14 (5%)
	Virtual world	-	-	2 (3%)	1 (2%)	-	3 (6%)	6 (2%)
Subject Areas	Art/media arts	4 (17%)	12 (24%)	uy10 (17%)	12 (24%)	6 (12%)	4 (8%)	48 (17%)
	Computer Literacy	2 (9%)	5 (10%)	32 (53%)	16 (32%)	19 (39%)	15 (30%)	89 (35%)
	History	-	4 (8%)	5 (8%)	2 (4%)	-	3 (6%)	14 (5%)
	Geography	-	2 (4%)	2 (3%)	1 (2%)	-	2 (4%)	7 (2,5%)
	Languages	8 (35%)	11 (22%)	6 (10%)	13 (26%)	19 (39%)	16 (32%)	73 (26%)
	Life skills	8 (35%)	1 (2%)	-	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	-	12 (4%)
	Science/math	-	8 (16%)	1 (2%)	3 (6%)	2 (4%)	3 (6%)	17 (6%)
	Social studies	1 (4,5%)	7 (14%)	4 (7%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	7 (14%)	21 (7,5%)
	Religion	-	-	-	-	1 (2%)	-	1 (0,5%)

		Belgium**	Bulgaria	Italy	Lithuania	Poland	Romania	Total
Media Issues	Advertising/ Consumerism	1 (4,5%)	1 (2%)	2 (3%)	16 (20%)	7 (14%)	4 (8%)	31 (11%)
	Assessment & Evaluation	2 (9%)	30 (60%)	-	11 (14%)	3 (6%)	8 (16%)	54 (19%)
	Digital Literacy	-	7 (14%)	3 (5%)	20 (25%)	22 (45%)	7 (14%)	59 (21%)
	Film study/ Movie making	1 (4,5%)	1 (2%)	4 (7%)	2 (2,5%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	11 (4%)
	Global media issues	5 (22%)	-	-	10 (12,5%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	17 (6%)
	Health issues	-	1 (2%)	-	3 (4%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	6 (2%)
	History of media	-	-	2 (3%)	2 (2,5%)	-	-	4 (1,5%)
	How to teach media literacy	-	-	1 (2%)	-	2 (4%)	-	3 (1%)
	Media activism	-	-	-	1 (1%)	-	-	1 (0,5%)
	Media industry/ Economics	1 (4,5%)	-	-	-	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	3 (1%)
	Music/Music videos	-	-	-	-	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	2 (1%)
	News/Politics/ Democracy	3 (13%)	2 (4%)	9 (15%)	4 (5%)	2 (4%)	-	20 (7%)
	Parents, kids & media	1 (4,5%)	2 (4%)	-	1 (1%)	-	-	4 (1,5%)
	Production/ Creating media	6 (26%)	1 (2%)	29 (48%)	-	2 (4%)	26 (52%)	66 (23,5%)
	Stereotyping & representation	2 (9%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	6 (7,5%)	1 (2%)	-	11 (4%)
	TV and popular culture	-	1 (2%)	3 (5%)	2 (2,5%)	2 (4%)	-	8 (3%)
	Visual literacy	1 (4,5%)	3 (6%)	6 (10%)	2 (2,5%)	2 (4%)	-	14 (5%)

		Belgium**	Bulgaria	Italy	Lithuania	Poland	Romania	Total
Teaching strategies ***	Receptive	3 (13%)	-	7 (12%)	4 (8%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	15 (5,3%)
	Directive	3 (13%)	16 (32%)	2 (3%)	34 (68%)	28 (57%)	18 (36%)	101 (36%)
	Guided discovery	23 (100%)	40 (80%)	46 (76%)	36 (72%)	28 (57%)	49 (98%)	222 (79%)
	Collaborative	17 (85%)	38 (76%)	54 (90%)	21 (42%)	26 (53%)	44 (90%)	200 (71%)
Evaluation	Quantitative test	1 (4,5%)	1 (2%)	3 (5%)	2 (4%)	-	3 (6%)	10 (3,5%)
	Open test	2 (9%)	4 (8%)	18 (10%)	5 (10%)	3 (6%)	6 (12%)	38 (13,5%)
	Blended strategies	9 (39%)	5 (10%)	4 (7%)	5 (10%)	6 (12%)	15 (30%)	44 (16%)
	Absent	10 (43,5%)	15 (30%)	17 (28%)	19 (38%)	17 (35%)	11 (22%)	89 (31,5%)
	Not available	1 (4,5%)	25 (50%)	18 (30%)	19 (38%)	23 (47%)	15 (30%)	101 (36%)
Transfera-bility	Yes	18 (78%)	24 (48%)	50 (83%)	15 (30%	22 (45%)	31 (62%)	160 (57%)
	No	-	-	1 (2%)	-	-	-	1 (0,5%)
	Absent	-	-	-	2 (4%)	-	-	2 (1%)
	Not available	5 (22%)	26 (52%)	9 (15%)	33 (66%)	27 (55%)	19 (38%)	119 (42%)
Documen-tation	For teacher	13 (56,5%)	13 (26%)	9 (15%)	25 (45,5%)	10 (20%)	5 (10%)	75 (26,6%)
	For students	-	2 (4%)	15 (25%)	3 (5,5%)	5 (10%)	11 (22%)	36 (13%)
	For teacher and students	5 (22%)	10 (20%)	21 (35%)	8 (14,5%)	4 (8%)	7 (14%)	45 (16%)
	Not available	3 (13%)	12 (24%)	7 (12%)	17 (31%)	14 (27%)	27 (54%)	80 (28%)
	Absent	2 (9%)	13 (26%)	8 (13%)	2 (4%)	16 (33%)	5 (10%)	46 (16%)

		Belgium**	Bulgaria	Italy	Lithuania	Poland	Romania	Total
Criticalities	Low budget	-	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	-	-	6 (12%)	8 (3%)
	Low technical abilities	-	6 (12%)	4 (7%)	7 (14%)	-	1 (2%)	18 (6,5%)
	Low time	-	1 (2%)	8 (13%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	14 (5%)
	No or insufficient equipment	1 (4,5%)	5 10%)	7 (12%)	-	4 (8,5%)	6 (12%)	23 (8%)
	Low collaboration among colleagues	-	-	1 (2%)	-	-	4 (8%)	5 (2%)
	No communication with familiy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	No institutional support	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Low or absent sense of belonging among students	-	1 (2%)	2 (3%)	2 (4%)	-	-	5 (2%)
	Low or absent students' authonomy	2 (9%)	2 (4%)	5 (8%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	3 (6%)	14 (5%)
	Low students' motivation	3 (14%)	3 (6%)	5 (8%)	-	3 (6%)	3 (6%)	17 (6%)
	Lack of human resources	-	-	2 (3%)	1 (2%)	-	-	3 (1%)
	Difficulties in students-teachers interaction	1 (4,5%)	-	4 (7%)	1 (2%)	-	-	6 (2%)
	Difficulties in classroom management	1 (4,5%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	3 (6%)	2 (4%)	-	9 (3%)

		Belgium**	Bulgaria	Italy	Lithuania	Poland	Romania	Total
Criticalities	Difficulties in identifying information	6 (27%)	2 (4%)	3 (5%)	4 (8%)	4 (8,5%)	3 (6%)	22 (8%)
	Difficulties in integrating lab activities within the curriculum	-	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	-	-	-	2 (1%)
	Absent	6 (27%)	3 (6%)	-	3 (6%)	12 (25,5%)	1 (2%)	25 (9%)
	Not specified	2 (9%)	23 (46%)	16 (27%)	26 (52%)	19 (40%)	22 (44%)	108 (38%)
Results	Consistent with expectations and documented	5 (23%)	11 (22%)	24 (40%)	41 (77%)	1 (2%)	3 (6%)	43 (15%)
	Consistent with expectations but not documented	16 (73%)	33 (66%)	33 (55%)	6 (12%)	44 (94%)	42 (84%)	174 (62%)
	Over expectations and documented	-	-	-	1 (2%)	-	-	1 (0,5%)
	Over expectations but not documented	-	4 (8%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	3 (6%)	11 (4%)
	Under expectations and documented	-	-	-	1 (2%)	-	-	1 (0,5%)
	Under expectations but not documented	1 (4,5%)	2 (4%)	2 (3%)	-	-	2 (4%)	7 (2,5%)

		Belgium**	Bulgaria	Italy	Lithuania	Poland	Romania	Total
Product	Yes	8 (35%)	5 (10%)	8 (13%)	8 (14%)	3 (6%)	5 (10%)	37 (13%)
	Yes, testifying students' contribution	1 (4,5%)	9 (18%)	10 (17%)	10 (17%)	1 (2%)	16 (32%)	47 (17%)
	Yes, but not testifying students' contribution	-	-	2 (3%)	2 (3%)	-	1 (2%)	5 (2%)
	No	1 (4,5%)	9 (18%)	-	-	-	2 (4%)	12 (4%)
	Not available	13 (56,5%)	27 (54%)	40 (67%)	40 (69%)	45 (92%)	26 (52%)	191 (68%)

** The column percentages refer to the frequency of national number of experiences collected: Belgium 23, Bulgaria 50, Italy 60, Lithuania 50, Poland 49, Romania 50. Notice that the percentages of the total are calculated on the total number of experiences (282). Moreover, notice that representativeness is conceptual rather than statistical because of the low amount of data.*

*** As known, percentages should not be calculated under 30 cases. Howeever, to guarantee uniformity it was considered appropriate to include percentages also for Belgium. This should be considered as indicative of proportions and ratio.*

**** Notice that percentages reach a total of over 100% due to the possibility of giving multiple answers.*

*Tab. 2 – Media skills and Teaching methods**

	Critical Thinking	Reading	Writing	User
Receptive	11 (7%)	13 (8%)	10 (5%)	4 (4%)
Directive	64 (39%)	69 (41%)	70 (36%)	37 (35%)
Discovery guided	142 (86%)	135 (80%)	155 (79%)	90 (84%)
Collaborative	126 (76%)	118 (70%)	143 (73%)	36 (34%)

** The column percentages refer to the frequency of media skills compared to teaching methods. Notice that the percentages, calculated on the total number of occurrences of critical thinking skills (165), reading skills (169), writing skills (195) and user skills (107), reach a total of over 100% due to the possibility of giving multiple answers. Moreover, notice that representativeness is conceptual rather than statistical because of the low amount of data.*

*Tab. 3 – Media skills and Media used, Subject areas, Media issues, Criticalties**

		Critical Thinking	Reading	Writing	User
Media Used	Computer	15 (9%)	23 (14%)	26 (13%)	8 (7%)
	Web 1.0	57 (35%)	62 (37%)	61 (31%)	36 (34%)
	Web 2.0	9 (5%)	11 (7%)	18 (9%)	4 (4%)
	Audio & video	51 (31%)	46 (27%)	62 (32%)	41 (38%)
	Photo	3 (2%)	2 (1%)	4 (2%)	2 (2%)
	Film	-	-	-	-
	Books	9 (5%)	11 (7%)	7 (4%)	6 (6%)
	Mobile phone	4 (2%)	2 (1%)	2 (1%)	1 (1%)
	Newspaper	13 (8%)	7 (4%)	9 (5%)	5 (5%)
	Virtual world	4 (2%)	4 (2%)	5 (3%)	4 (4%)
Subject Areas	Art/media arts	31 (19%)	29 (17%)	33 (17%)	24 (22%)
	Computer Literacy	53 (32%)	60 (36%)	68 (35%)	33 (31%)
	History	9 (5%)	9 (5%)	10 (5%)	3 (3%)
	Geography	3 (2%)	4 (2%)	5 (3%)	2 (2%)
	Languages	36 (22%)	38 (22%)	48 (25%)	21 (20%)
	Life Skills	8 (5%)	7 (4%)	6 (3%)	8 (7%)
	Science/ Math	9 (5%)	8 (5%)	10 (5%)	4 (4%)
	Social Studies	16 (10%)	11 (7%)	14 (7%)	11 (10%)
	Religion	-	1 (1%)	-	-

		Critical Thinking	Reading	Writing	User
Media Issues	Advertising/ Consumerism	8 (5%)	10 (6%)	10 (5%)	10 (9%)
	Assessment & Evaluation	31 (19%)	30 (18%)	32 (16%)	21 (20%)
	Digital Literacy	29 (18%)	37 (22%)	40 (21%)	19 (18%)
	Film study/ Movie making	6 (4%)	5 (3%)	7 (4%)	6 (6%)
	Global media issues	6 (4%)	8 (5%)	8 (4%)	8 (7%)
	Health issues	3 (2%)	3 (2%)	3 (2%)	1 (1%)
	History of media	1 (1%)	2 (1%)	1 (1%)	-
	How to teach media literacy	2 (1%)	2 (1%)	-	1 (1%)
	Media activism	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)
	Media industry/ Economics	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	2 (1%)	1 (1%)
	Music/ Music videos	2 (1%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)
	News/ Politics/ Democracy	16 (10%)	13 (8%)	12 (6%)	5 (5%)
	Parents, kids & media	4 (2%)	2 (1%)	3 (2%)	1 (1%)
	Production/ Creating media	38 (23%)	29 (17%)	53 (27%)	21 (20%)
	Stereotyping & represen-tation	8 (5%)	9 (5%)	6 (3%)	6 (6%)
	TV and popular culture	3 (2%)	5 (3%)	5 (3%)	1 (1%)
	Visual literacy	6 (4%)	10 (6%)	10 (5%)	4/ (4%)

		Critical Thinking	Reading	Writing	User
Criticalities	Low budget	6 (4%)	7 (4%)	7 (4%)	4 (4%)
	Low technical abilities	10 (6%)	10 (6%)	14 (7%)	7 (7%)
	Low time	11 (7%)	9 (5%)	13 (7%)	5 (5%)
	No or insufficient equipment	10 (6%)	11 (7%)	18 (9%)	10 (9%)
	Low collaboration among colleagues	4 (2%)	4 (2%)	4 (2%)	3 (3%)
	No communication with familiy	-	-	-	-
	No institutional support	-	-	-	-
	Low or absent sense of belonging among students	4 (2%)	3 (2%)	4 (2%)	4 (4%)
	Low or absent students' authonomy	7 (4%)	7 (4%)	11 (6%)	8 (7%)
	Low students' motivation	10 (6%)	7 (4%)	13 (7%)	10 (9%)
	Lack of human resources	5 (3%)	3 (2%)	3 (2%)	4 (4%)
	Difficulties in students-teachers interaction	8 (5%)	4 (2%)	5 (3%)	3 (3%)

		Critical Thinking	Reading	Writing	User
Criticalities	Difficulties in classroom management	17 (10%)	14 (8%)	15 (8%)	6 (6%)
	Difficulties in identifying information	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	-
	Difficulties in integrating lab activities within the curriculum	16 (10%)	17 (10%)	18 (9%)	11 (10%)
	Absent or not specified	56 (34%)	72 (43%)	69 (35%)	32 (30%)

** The column percentages refer to the frequency of media skills compared to media used, subject areas, media issues and criticalities. The percentages were calculated on the total number of occurrences of critical thinking skills (165), reading skills (169), writing skills (195) and user skills (107). Notice that representativeness is conceptual rather than statistical because of the low amount of data.*

*Tab. 4 – Media Used and Media Issues, Transferability, Documentation**

		Computer	Web 1.0	Web 2.0	Audio & video	Photo	Books	Mobile phone	News-paper	Virtual world
Media Issues	Advertising/ Consumerism	3 (8%)	5 (5%)	1 (5%)	6 (8%)	-	-	1 (25%)	-	-
	Assessment & Evaluation	4 (11%)	16 (16%)	1 (5%)	19 (24%)	-	3 (20%)	3 (75%)	3 (21%)	1 (17%)
	Digital Literacy	13 (35%)	21 (21%)	5 (24%)	13 (16%)	1 (20%)	2 (13%)	-	2 (14%)	1 (17%)
	Film study/ Movie making	1 (3%)	1 (1%)	-	9 (11%)	-	-	-	-	-
	Global media issues	-	6 (6%)	2 (10%)	1 (1%)	-	2 (13%)	-	-	-
	Health issues	1 (3%)	2 (2%)	1 (5%)	-	-	-	-	-	-
	History of media	-	-	-	-	-	1 (7%)	-	1 (7%)	-
	How to teach Media Literacy	-	2 (2%)	-	1 (1%)	-	-	-	-	-
	Media activism	1 (3%)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Madia Industry/ Economics	-	1 (1%)	-	1 (1%)	-	-	-	-	-
	Music/Music video	-	-	-	2 (3%)	-	-	-	-	-
	News, Politics, Democracy	3 (8%)	7 (7%)	-	3 (4%)	1 (20%)	1 (7%)	-	5 (36%)	-
	Parents, kids & media	-	1(1%)	1(5%)	-	-	2 (13%)	-	-	-
	Production/ Creation media	7 (19%)	24 (24%)	10 (48%)	15 (19%)	1 (20%)	1 (7%)	-	2 (14%)	3 (50%)

		Computer	Web 1.0	Web 2.0	Audio & video	Photo	Books	Mobile phone	News-paper	Virtual world
Media Issues	Stereotyping & representation	-	7 (7%)	-	2 (4%)	-	-	-	1 (7%)	1 (17%)
	TV and popular culture	2 (5%)	1 (1%)	-	5 (6%)	-	-	-	-	-
	Visual Literacy	2 (5%)	5 (5%)	-	3 (4%)	2 (40%)	2 (13%)	-	-	-
Criticalities	Low budget	-	2 (2%)	1 (5%)	2 (2,5%)	1 (20%)	-	-	1 (7%)	1 (17%)
	Low technical abilities	4 (11%)	3 (3%)	5 (24%)	6 (7,5%)	-	-	-	-	-
	Low time	-	4 (4%)	1 (5%)	5 (6%)	-	-	1 (25%)	3 (21%)	-
	No or insufficient equipments	4 (11%)	11 (11%)	2 10%)	4 (5%)	-	-	1 (25%)	1 (7%)	-
	Low collaboration among colleagues	-	1 (1%)	1 (5%)	1 (1%)	-	-	-	1 (7%)	1 (17%)
	Low or absent sense of belonging among students	-	1 (1%)	1 (5%)	2 (2,5%)	-	-	-	1 (7%)	-
	Low or absent students' autonomy	3 (8%)	3 (3%)	1 (5%)	3 (4%)	-	2/15 (13%)	-	1 (7%)	-
	Low or absent students' motivation	2 (5%)	4 (4%)	1 (5%)	6 (7,5%)	1 (20%)	1/15 (7%)	-	2 (14%)	-
	Lack of human resources	-	1 (1%)	1 (5%)	1 (1%)	-	0	-	-	-
	Difficulties in the students - teachers interaction	-	4 (4%)	1 (5%)	-	-	1/15 (7%)	-	-	-

		Computer	Web 1.0	Web 2.0	Audio & video	Photo	Books	Mobile phone	News-paper	Virtual world
Criticalities	Difficulties in classroom management	1 (3%)	-	1 (5%)	3 (4%)	-	3/15 (20%)	1 (25%)	-	-
	Difficulties in identifying information	3 (8%)	8 (8%)	-	10 (12,5%)	1 (20%)	-	-	-	-
	Difficulties in integrating lab activities within the curriculum	-	1 (1%)	-	1 (1%)	-	0	-	-	-
	Absent	3 (8%)	11 (11%)	-	7 (9%)	-	4/15 (27%)	-	-	-
	Not available	14 (38%)	45 (46%)	5 (24%)	29 (36%)	2 (40%)	4/15 (27%)	1 (25%)	4 (29%)	4 (67%)
Trans-ferability	Yes	20 (54%)	48 (48%)	13 (62%)	47 (59%)	4 (80%)	11 (73%)	2 (50%)	11 (79%)	3 (50%)
	No	-	-	-	1(1%)	-	-	-	-	-
	Absent	1 (3%)	-	-	-	-	1 (7%)	-	-	-
	Not available	13 (35%)	51 (52%)	8 (38%)	32 (40%)	1 (20%)	3 (20%)	2 (50%)	3 (21%)	3 (50%)
Documen-tation	For teacher	9 (24%)	26 (26%)	8 (38%)	20 (25%)	1 (20%)	10 (67%)	1 (25%)	4 (29%)	2 (33%)
	For students	3 (8%)	11 (11%)	1 (5%)	8 (10%)	2 (40%)	1 (7%)	-	2 (14%)	-
	For teacher and students	7 (19%)	22 (22%)	4 (19%)	17 (21%)	2 (40%)	1 (7%)	-	4 (29%)	2 (33%)
	Not available	5 (14%)	13 (13%)	3 (14%)	18 (23%)	-	2 (13%)	2 (50%)	-	1 (17%)
	Absent	10 (27%)	27 (27%)	5 (24%)	17 (21%)	-	1 (7%)	1 (25%)	4 (29%)	1 (17%)

** The column percentages refer to the frequency of media used compared to media issues, criticalities, transferability and documentation. The percentages were calculated on the total number of occurrences of each media: computer (37), web 1.0 (97), web 2.0 (21), audio & video (80), photo (5), books (15), mobile phone (4), newspaper (14), virtual world (6). Notice that representativeness is conceptual rather than statistical because of the low amount of data.*

*Tab. 5 – Teaching Methods and Subject Areas, Media Issues, Criticalities**

		Receptive	Directive	Guided discovery	Collaborative
Subject Areas	Art/ Media arts	2 (13%)	20 (20%)	37 (17%)	29 (15%)
	Computer Literacy	6 (38%)	31 (31%)	68 (31%)	72 (36%)
	History	1 (6%)	5 (5%)	11 (5%)	13 (7%)
	Geography	-	1 (1%)	5 (2%)	5 (3%)
	Languages	3 (19%)	26 (26%)	54 (24%)	44 (22%)
	Life Skills	3 (19%)	5 (5%)	11 (5%)	9 (5%)
	Science/Math	-	9 (9%)	15 (7%)	10 (5%)
	Social Studies	1 (6%)	4 (4%)	18 (8%)	16 (8%)
	Spirituality/Religion	-	-	-	-
Media Issues	Advertising/Consumerism	-	5 (5%)	13 (6%)	11 (6%)
	Assessment & Evaluation	2 (13%)	19 (19%)	41 (18%)	37 (19%)
	Digital Literacy	3 (19%)	32 (32%)	39 (18%)	35 (18%)
	Film study/Movie making	3 (19%)	4 (4%)	10 (5%)	7 (4%)
	Global media issues	1 (6%)	4 (4%)	8 (4%)	5 (3%)
	Health issues	-	2 (2%)	3 (1%)	3 (2%)
	History of media	1 (6%)	-	2 (1%)	-
	How to teach Media Literacy	-	1 (1%)	2 (1%)	2 (1%)
	Media activism	-	1 (1%)	-	-
	Madia Industry/ Economics	-	-	2 (1%)	2 (1%)
	Music/ Music video	-	2 (2%)	-	-
	News, Politics, Democracy	3 (19%)	6 (6%)	16 (7%)	17 (9%)
	Parents, kids & media	-	2 (2%)	3 (1%)	3 (2%)

		Receptive	Directive	Guided discovery	Collaborative
Media Issues	Production/ Creation media	2 (13%)	12 (12%)	54 (24%)	57 (29%)
	Stereotyping & representation	1 (6%)	5 (5%)	9 (4%)	5 (3%)
	TV and popular culture	-	3 (3%)	6 (3%)	3 (2%)
	Visual Literacy	-	3 (3%)	11 (5%)	9 (5%)
Criticalities	Low budget	-	2 (2%)	7 (3%)	7 (4%)
	Low technical abilities	1 (6%)	8 (8%)	16 (7%)	10 (5%)
	Low time	2 (12,5%)	3 (3%)	10 (5%)	11 (6%)
	No or insufficient equipment	1 (6%)	5 (5%)	20 (9%)	19 (10%)
	Low collaboration among colleagues	-	3 (3%)	5 (2%)	4 (2%)
	No communication with familiy	-	-	-	-
	No institutional support	-	-	-	-
	Low or absent sense of belonging among students	-	2 (2%)	5 (2%)	4 (2%)
	Low or absent students' authonomy	1 (6%)	5 (5%)	11 (5%)	11 (6%)
	Low students' motivation	-	4 (4%)	13 (6%)	12 (6%)
	Lack of human resources	1 (6%)	1 (1%)	3 (1%)	3 (2%)
	Difficulties in students-teachers interaction	-	-	4 (2%)	6 (3%)
	Difficulties in classroom management	1 (6%)	5 (5%)	7 (3%)	5 (3%)
	Difficulties in identifying information	2 (12,5%))	10 (10%)	14 (6%)	15 (8%)
	Difficulties in integrating lab activities within the curriculum	-	-	2 (1%)	2 (1%)
	Absent	-	12 (12%)	19 (9%)	16 (8%)
	Not available	7 (44%)	41 (41%)	86 (39%)	75 (38%)

** The column percentages refer to the frequency of teaching methods compared to subjects areas, media issues, criticalities. The percentages were calculated on the total number of occurrences of each teaching methods: receptive (15), directive (101), guided discovery (222) and collaborative (200). Notice that representativeness is conceptual rather than statistical because of the low amount of data.*

I. Bruni

Chapter 5
The Practice of Media Education. Topics, Issues and Examples of «Good Practices»

1. Introduction

The Media Education (ME) practices collected under the project On Air have been subjected to an evaluation process in order to identify «good practices». As previously mentioned (see Ch. 3), the evaluation was of the external kind. It was entrusted to teachers participating in the project, who were neither directly involved nor authors in the first-person[1]. Let's recall that, in order to adopt the same parameters of evaluation, we used a structured grid in which different aspects are taken into account which range from the educational objectives of the feasibility of experience, from the accuracy of the documentation to the quality of any production[2].

Each partner has organized two workshops for evaluation: one dedicated to the analysis of the practices fully described through the «Case study form» and the other, to comment freely on the practices briefly described in the reduced version of the «Case study form»[3]. The presence of teachers ranged from 12 to 20 meeting participants, and the duration was between 2 and 4 hours. Some partners have sent the materials (including the form, the attachments and the evaluation grid) in advance via email. In other cases,

[1] Belgium is an exception: a teacher here was found to evaluate her own project, but preferred to remain aloof to allow the opinions of colleagues to emerge and ensure the fairness of the process.
[2] For a detailed presentation of the evaluation grid refer to Ch. 3.
[3] The evaluation grid was applied only to the practices analytically described.

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the materials were distributed in paper form at the opening of the meetings. A notable exception is Bulgaria, where a contest was launched at national level. The workshop was intended to be experienced as a conclusion of this initiative, and therefore some teachers presented their projects personally to the public of evaluators. During the working sessions participants were divided into groups, usually made up of five members, and had to share their individual impressions, possibly reaching an agreement on the final evaluation of each project. This two-stage procedure, from the individual to the collective, allowed for an in-depth experience and a comparative discussion of evaluations, so much so that sometimes the reviews have been restated, and any doubts or misunderstandings overcome. At the end of the workshop, a kind of ranking was drawn up of the best experiences, identifying those achieving a higher score, and that seemed the most significant.

This process was made possible not only by the technical and organizational support of local partners, but by the willingness of participants to work in a constructive and collaborative way: in a sense, we can say there was greater participation from teachers in connection to the evaluation activities, rather than in the description of their personal experiences, this goes to show how expressing opinions is a true 'professional deformation'. The workshop, according to the participants themselves, has proved a valuable opportunity for discussion and study on some more general topics related to the project On Air. For example, the topic of the use of the media in school, but also the importance of documentation and assessment tools: in essence these workshops were informative and formative moments for the participants themselves.

In the previous chapter, we tried to give a comprehensive picture of the main trends that have emerged through the analysis of educational media practices; now we want to investigate further, focusing in particular on some of the practices collected. We have chosen among those practices which received a good evaluation in the partner countries and which offered a basis for reflecting on five topics of key importance for ME today: digital citizenship, creative production, curriculum integration, synergy with the emerging issues on education, and community building. In the light of existing literature on these topics, we will explore a number of good practices to provide useful examples of practice in the field of ME.

2. Critical competence, civic journalism, digital citizenship

The relationship between citizenship and the media has been conceived over time in very different ways: from reflection on the formation of public opinion or the spectacle of politics, to the opportunities of access to the democratic life through the Internet (e-democracy), and the new horizons

for participation offered by digital media and online communities[4]. In the era of crisis in the Western democratic system, manifested for example in the increase of abstention, in distrust of the political class and disinterest of young people in institutions, new media and web 2.0 can be the fertile ground for new forms of bottom-up mobilization and active citizenship[5].

For this reason, we now speak widely of digital citizenship, which indicates the need to prepare new generations through ME, regarded as a condition which provides access to the global arena, and then to the fullness of life in society on the whole[6]. The purely instrumental perspective, dominant until a few decades ago, where the media were seen as powerful channels from which one must defend oneself, or as persuasive counter alters of rational, and therefore of political discussion[7], is being replaced by an ecological approach, where fair and deserving space is given to the reflection on the critical appropriation of media by individuals and their communities[8].

Coherently with this ecological perspective, Jenkins comes to postulate the emergence of a new media culture, which defines «participatory culture», summarizing the salient in five points:

> For the moment, let's define participatory culture as one: 1.With relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement; 2.With strong support for creating and sharing one's creations with others; 3.With some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices; 4.Where members believe that their contributions matter; 5.Where members feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least they care what other people think about what they have created)[9].

This culture is not characterized by the use of multimedia and interactive technologies, but by the sense of participation and active approaches to community building, sharing and exchanging content. In this context, it becomes necessary to redefine the concept of literacy with a shift of focus from the individual to that of social involvement: «the new media literacy should be seen as social skills, as ways of interacting within a larger community, and not simply an individualized skill to be used for personal expression»[10].

[4] Jenkins H., *Convergence culture*, New York University, New York and London 2006.
[5] Abruzzese A., Susca V., *Immaginari postdemocratici. Nuovi media, cybercultura e forme di potere*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2006.
[6] Buckingham D., *Media education. Literacy, learning and contemporary culture*, Polity Press-Blackwell Publishing, London 2003.
[7] Postman N., Amusing ourselves to death: public discourse in the age of show business, Penguin Books 1985.
[8] Fabbro F., *Media education e cittadinanza*, «Dirigenti scuola», 4 (XXX), pp. 27-40.
[9] Jenkins et al., *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21° Century*, The John and Catherine MacArthur Foundation, Cambridge (MA) 2009, p. 7.
[10] *Ibidem*, p. 20.

Today ME seems to be set before a challenge involving many ethical implications: preparing young people towards a responsible and active use of media, and towards mediated interactions, implies a critical review of key issues such as identity, privacy, copyright, credibility, and participation all in the light of a study on the attitudes currently emerging in the digital environment[11].

Within the wide database of practices of the On Air project, there are several proposals for ME courses on citizenship, worthy of interest. Here, we focus in particular on two Italian projects, namely «From digital naïf Navigators (partially) critical»[12] by Marco Guastavigna, and «The historical journal - Asti 1861»[13] by Patrizia Vajola and Carla Cavallotto.

The first project was carried out between September and October 2009 in a vocational school in Turin (i.e., the IIS Beccari) involving one class. «How to use Facebook and You Tube in a conscious way?»: this is the question from which everything takes off.

Guastavigna has often witnessed, during breaks in classes, conversations between his students on social networks, realizing that students were very ingenuous in the definition and use of them. The project was therefore aimed at developing critical awareness on issues such as commercials and the presence of advertising within social networks, the risks of posting personal information, the implications of sharing images, video and media products in general, the existence of an etiquette to be followed online, the contrast of cyber bullying.

In the introductory phase, audiovisual materials on the subject were shown to children, some of them borrowed from campaigns of the same social network itself. Pupils were then asked the to discover more, both through the navigation and management of their profiles and analysis of the conditions of use of Facebook and You Tube, and with the search for additional materials to be shared and analyzed in class. We would like to stress how the importance of theoretical discussion immediately engaged with the daily habits of the students on social networks, but also with finding information online: too often, we tend to see the network as a repository of neutral and free information, and think that the so-called digital natives know how to properly use a search engine.

Yet, looking at the literature, we learn that this skill which is vital to future citizenship, is far from obvious. Sometimes searching on the Internet does not reach the given target, or is conducted in a naive and

[11] James et al., *Young People, Ethics and New Digital Media. A synthesis from the GoodPlay Project*, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Cambridge (MA) 2009, p. 5.

[12] The description of the project is available online at: http://www.onair.medmediaeducation.it/_casestudies/..%5Cfiles%5C1712200921038-638-38.pdf.

[13] The project is fully described in Ch. 3, Box n. 3. An online version of the project's description, together with instruments and documents, can be found at: http://www.onair.medmediaeducation.it/_casestudies/..%5Cfiles%5C3012200916206-424-18.pdf.

risky fashion, and information is taken for granted without checking its source or reliability[14].

The civic value of this project emerges from the concluding observations of Guastavigna: students tend to regard adults, and especially their teachers, to be incompetent due to the lack of practical skills in the use of new technologies, but at the end of this experience, they rethink this generational view, aware of the fact that they are totally unprepared in terms of ethical and social implications.

The second project, which have been already mentioned at the end of Ch. 3 (see Box n. 3), was carried out in the IIS Vittorio Alfieri in Asti by Vayola and Cavalletto, involving two classes belonging to two different school curriculums, one related to professional and the other to humanities subjects. This experience is based on the creation and production of a newspaper. The activity of school journalism can be seen as one of the most significant experiences to address the ethical challenges of ME, and to promote contemporary forms of e-engagement and digital citizenship[15]. It enables students to reflect on the responsibility to produce public messages on their communities, and on the defence of everyone's right to make their voices heard. In this sense, we agree with Felini on the value of media production in education. On the one hand, the invitation to 'fly high', heeding not only to the most trivial forms of communication or fashion, but also considering the more complex and traditional types of writings (such as writing news), stimulates high cognitive performance level. On the other hand, the idea of providing students a real audience through partnerships with local media may have a positive impact on motivation and engagement[16]. These considerations are certainly true for the project «The historical journal - Asti 1861». Thanks to strong cooperation with the local edition of a famous newspaper, it was possible to disseminate 25,000 copies of a few pages produced by students in the territory. This joint venture stimulated the modulation of their production for a real audience on a large scale, reaching well beyond the school walls.

Besides the production, even the constant work of reading and discussion of the news has important educational effects, as it implies becoming familiar with and reflecting upon current events both local and global. In this way it can promote the development of a cultural background, allowing you to connect what is learned within the surrounding reality and to investigate the dynamics of the formulation and interpretation of messages, linked to economic, political, and social factors[17].

[14] Hobbs R., *Digital and Media Literacy: a plan of action*, The Aspen Istitute, Washington, D.C. 2010a, pp. 32-33. For further references see Ch. 6.
[15] Gonnet J., *Educazione ai media e politica*, in M. Morcellini, P. C. Rivoltella (Eds.), *La sapienza di comunicare*, Erickson, Trento 2007, p. 124.
[16] Felini D., *Educazione, media e cultura contemporanea: quali compiti per la scuola?*, «Dirigenti scuola», 4 (XXX), p. 13.
[17] Hobbs R., *op. cit*., pp. 34-35.


ASTI 1861

«Roma diventerà capitale senza compromessi»

L'opinione del generale Garibaldi

E' brigantaggio oppure rivolta popolare?

Cassa di Risparmio di Asti

1812 Da diciannove anni la tua banca 1861

One of the pages published as an insert in the local edition of a popular daily newspaper, dedicated to the interior: besides regular items, we also find an interview with a well-known personality in Italian history. As you can see, the layout perfectly embodies today's newspaper with vast advertising regarding the historical period.

3. Creativity and media production

Media competence is not just about the ability to read text, but also about producing it autonomously. Today it seems obvious, but this was not the case a few decades ago. It was feared that students involved in active production ended up imitating of the mainstream media to adhere to the dominant conventions. It recurred to practice only in a functional way to deconstruct the messages, by understanding the basic codes, thereby underestimating the potential for creative and expressive media[18].

With the advent of digital media, however, the production has become more accessible both at the cognitive and on the instrumental or economic level: young people themselves have begun to take a hold of these new technologies and to experiment. As a result we witness a significant gap between school and everyday culture, where the media were relegated to the role of teaching aids. Indeed, the use of new media by children and adolescents often ends up being trivialized in forms of communication and information retrieval, and the fact that they are heavy users of media do not automatically translate into creative and expressive use, but requires a specific educational intervention in this regard: «[...] there has been a kind of translation from the 'passive' knowledge that is derived from viewing or reading - or indeed from analysis - to the 'active' knowledge that is required for production or writing»[19]. The purpose is neither to teach elements of the professional technique, or give vent to a romantic idea of creativity and individual, but rather to highlight the collaborative and social dimensions of media production.

[18] Buckingham D., *op. cit.*, 2003; Masterman L., *Teaching the Media*, Comedia, London 1985, it. ed. *A scuola di media*, La Scuola, Brescia 1997, pp. 78-80.
[19] Buckingham D., *op. cit.*, pp. 132-133.

For this reason ME has identified learning by doing as the path to follow. It is a methodology that combines practice and reflexivity, placing attention on the care of the entire production process, rather than solely on the final result: «The practical work is not an end in itself, but a necessary means to develop a critical understanding of the media»[20].

Working on media production requires a fair investment in time, but it can be motivating, especially for students at risk who lack in concentration. This is true for both the old and new media: it would be a mistake to give in to the fascination of technological innovation and focus only on high-tech products[21]. During the activity, students work in groups, sharing tasks and roles, and shared in-depth elaboration of a theme: the dynamics which occur between the participants are an integral part of pedagogical intervention. We must know how to manage them and facilitate the acquisition of interpersonal and social skills. Once you get to the finished product, it is important to provide a moment of presentation or disclosure, possibly public, and to evaluate the entire process with appropriate tools, in order to trigger a virtuous circle.

Production and creativity are some of the slogans of the project «Literature in virtual dimension - Interdisciplinary contest»[22], set up by teachers of the Zinca Golescu college in Romania for five consecutive years. This is a competition for students, and open to the participation of young people by involving organizations in the area. The aim is to produce multimedia educational materials on literature, through an interdisciplinary approach based on various communication tools: the media outputs ranging from web pages to video clips, magazines or photo reports. Students are guided through various steps: from the organization of the groups to the development of a work plan, from the search for information to the design of a multimedia product, up to implementation through specific software. In the final event, all products are officially presented by the working group, and submitted for evaluation by an application committee composed of teachers and professionals. The organisers believe that the competitive context, coupled with the collaborative mode of production, is an added value to stimulate and engage young people, that build on their skills and expertise. It has also provided positive effects for the Zinca Golescu school, which has been able to build and consolidate a broad network of relationships with other educational institutions, parents, stakeholders, and professionals in communication and education. These forms of collaboration are useful in stating the importance of ME not only in educational environments, but in general within civil society[23].

[20] Masterman L., *op. cit.*, p. 79.
[21] *Ibidem*.
[22] The description of the project is available online at: http://www.onair.medmediaeducation.it/_casestudies/..%5Cfiles%5C1312010163910-582-36.pdf.
[23] Hobbs R., *op. cit.*, pp. 44-46.

4. Media education and curriculum

The question of the location of ME in the school has always been much debated[24]. In general, there are four possibilities: the disciplinary hypothesis[25], the curriculum approach[26], the integration into single traditional disciplines proposal, or the creation of thematic workshops experience[27]. Let us look more analytically at each one of these possibilities.

In the first hypothesis, the ME is recognized as an independent discipline with its own teacher, a space time, and (possibly) a laboratory with specific equipment. This institutional legitimacy would enable a widespread dissemination in the area, a good continuity in didactics, and the opening not only to new content but also to innovative teaching methods[28]. In contrast, this could cause disciplinary boundaries, and irresponsibility demonstrated by colleagues, who often make extensive use of media for didactics media such as films, videos, pictures. For this reason, many experts support the idea of introducing a cross-ME in the curriculum: all disciplines should be involved in media literacy including it as an element worthy of constant attention. In this case, however, the risk is that the issues specific to ME, instead of being integrated with other areas of knowledge, end up being overly compressed, due to the content weight of a normal program.

The third option, that is the integration into traditional subjects, is seen by some as a strategy to ensure students the right to media education. For example, the literary subjects, being a compulsory part of the curriculum, were considered safe grounds for the diffusion of ME. Without specific training for teachers, the risk here is to subordinate the specific objectives of ME to those of other disciplines, reducing the range of topics or declining in partial formulations[29].

The last option is to make short workshops, often focusing on a single media and condensed into a few hours. These are experiences bounded in time and purpose, a kind of ME 'taster', often created with outside experts. They are able to leverage the exceptional nature of the proposal to interest and involve pupils, even in emotional terms. The obvious limit is that of not being able to provide comprehensive coverage, with the absence of continuity in the curriculum.

The last two options are the most represented among the practices described in the database of On Air. But there are also experiences

[24] Paparella N., *School and media curriculum*, «REM», 1, 1, 2009, p. 81-90.
[25] See for example the experience of Canada in Rivoltella P. C., *Media Education. Modelli, esperienze, profilo disciplinare*, Carocci, Roma 2001, pp. 69-70.
[26] Masterman L., *op. cit.*, p. 84-89.
[27] Felini D., *op. cit.*, p. 55.
[28] Masterman L., *op. cit.*, p. 77.
[29] Buckingham D., *op. cit.*, 2003.

which offer examples of the first two options, the disciplinary and the transversal.

We focus in particular on two projects reported by the teachers during the workshop evaluation, the Romanian case study «Teaching competence into Mass Media»[30] and the Bulgarian case study «Media at high school education: opportunities and challenges»[31].

The first was an optional course for Zinca Golescu upper secondary school students whose total duration was 35 hours spread over the entire school year 2008/2009. The objectives corresponded to the classic themes of ME, with good coverage of different areas: from the identification of the types of messages to their critical analysis, from knowledge on production techniques to the identification of stereotypes and prejudices, from the construction of media texts to democratic participation. From a methodological point of view, both textual analysis and brainstorming, simulations, role playing and production activities in the group have been used. The teacher, Lavinia Rizoiu, highlights the close relationship between topics and methodologies, as well as the particular appeal of the method of work on students, who received and appreciated the difference with traditional lectures. A fair level of technical knowledge was noted among pupils, who worked on photographic and video production, developing a critical attitude and an awareness of ethics. The second project, coordinated by Elena Sayanova, was aimed at the implementation of ME into the curriculum. It took place between 2005 and 2008 in Stoychev Nicola high school, involving more than 100 classes, with the availability of specific funding, albeit insignificant. The initial stages of the project were addressed to teachers. Teachers received special training and worked both on how to integrate the ME programs and on the methodologies to be adopted. Through constant work of coordination, it was possible to achieve an interdisciplinary course between music, physics, ICT, social studies, languages and literature designed for students and media literacy skills-acquisition of citizenship. The proposed activities were very diverse: from writing newspaper articles to the analysis of communication via chat and video games, from visiting newsrooms investigation of stereotypes and risk behaviours related to the use of media products. The biggest challenge, according to the coordinator Sayavona, was to introduce ME in the curriculum, since it required the involvement of individual teachers and team effort. From this point of view, the experience worked, because it invested in teacher training, and because it identified a professional figure responsible for the coordination of activities. The strong initial resistance

[30] The description of the project is available online at: http://www.onair.medmediaeducation.it/_casestudies/..%5Cfiles%5C161201019611-364-23.pdf.
[31] The description of the project is available online at: http://www.onair.medmediaeducation.it/_casestudies/..%5Cfiles%5C4112009164017-580-93.pdf.

by teachers was to change the existing relationship with students, to enable dialogue and participatory construction of knowledge.

5. Media education and emerging issues

The increasing importance of communication in contemporary society has led ME to develop synergies with educational themes close to the critical awareness of the fundamental system of the media. Numerous strong connections were made with health education[32], intercultural education[33], the construction of gender identity[34] and issues related to globalization, environmental protection, and human rights[35]. The idea at the heart of these synergies is rather obvious: the media are the bearers of messages that have a significant impact on younger generations, and sometimes represent risky behaviour and confirm stereotypes and prejudices, which must then become the subject of critical interpretation.

The link between ME and health education has become widely established, and supported during the opening speech at the World Summit on Children and Media in 2010: «Media education can be considered a revolutionary tool in the hands of health educators who can help teens to navigate safely and consciously into this media-saturated world»[36]. The ME can indeed be used to help young people to understand that media messages promote, glamorize and normalize at-risk behaviours, highlighting illness prevention and healthcare: this is particularly true when it comes to four important issues of addictive substance abuse, eating disorders, early and unprotected sexual activity, and the promotion of a healthy sport[37]. In helping the individual to be aware that the media exert social influence, health education could ultimately free itself from the classical approach which is purely medical and health oriented, expressed through means of intervention bordering with the concept of threatening[38].

Similarly, the analysis and deconstruction can be dedicated to the

[32] See for example: Center on Media and Child Health at www.cmch.tv; Tobacco Free Kids at www.tobaccofreekids.org/research; Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, *Alcohol Advertising and Youth*, Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, Washington, DC 2007.

[33] Carlsson U., Tayie S., Jacquinot G., Tornero J.M.P. (Eds.), *Empowerment through media education: an intercultural dialogue*, Nordicom, Göteborg 2008, www.unesco.org/unesdi/index.php/eng/doc/tous.1059.

[34] Carter C., Steiner L., *Critical Reading: Media and Gender*, Open University Press, Maidenhead 2004; Made P.A., Rama K., *Gender in Media Education: An audit of Gender in Journalism & Media Education and Training*, Gender links, Southern Africa 2010.

[35] Hoogerwerf E. J. (Ed.), *The mirror Project. Experiences in media education with disadvantaged youngsters*, AIAS Bologna ONLUS, Bologna 2002.

[36] Extract from the opening of the summit held in Karlstad by Alberto Pellai, Department of Public Health University of Milan. See also Pellai A., Marzorati P. (Eds.), *Educazione alla salute. Standard e linee guida dalla scuola elementare alla scuola superiore*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2001.

[37] Felini D., *op. cit.*, p. 200.

[38] *Ibidem*, p. 202.

problematic nature of gender identity, with the representation of men and women often loaded of positive or negative connotations, intended for imitation by teen role models. Similarly, you can also focus on cultural differences and stereotypes related to immigration. Finally, ME intended as a production activity can be a useful tool: direct engagement in the creation of media messages for young people is a strong motivation drive to think critically about certain issues, as demonstrated by the many experiences of NGOs and associations involving children and adolescents in the construction of public awareness campaigns. In addition to promoting the participation and a leading role, these projects have the advantage of communicating with young people using their own language, and therefore are successful in catching their attention. Among the good practices gathered, Lithuania has distinguished itself by the presence of many European projects, achieved thanks to the European Union programs such as Comenius and E-Twinning. The main purpose of these programs is to facilitate the creation of a European identity among the younger generations, linking schools in different countries and offering students forms of communication and cooperation. In this way, you can also educate students using various online tools, and improve foreign language skills. Here, we focus in particular on «Let's have a meal together»[39], described by Jurate Jaudzmiene, where we see the contribution of secondary schools in Sweden, Poland, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Italy, France, and the Pabirzes institution in Lithuania. The project's theme is food, intended as a vehicle of intercultural knowledge and habits and as a topic on which to promote awareness. Schools involved in the partnership participate by presenting their territory and sharing recipe dishes, depending on particular cultural traditions or festivities. Partner countries receive each other's materials and hold seminars dedicated to the preparation and tasting of various specialties. Thanks to this comparison, students are encouraged to reflect on their dietary habits, about possible alternatives, about the importance of proper nutrition for good health, but also about the existence of different cultures and the importance of a respectful mutual understanding. Thanks to the sharing of materials and the use of online collaborative tools, the participants will collectively draw on one of the best multimedia book of recipes. Further into the project, study visits and exchanges between the different states are organized. In this project, transnational media production and the use of information and communication technologies allow a direct comparison between students who recognize they possess their own cultural tradition, which can be compared and exchanged with peers from other countries.

[39] The description of the project is available online at: http://www.onair.medmediaeducation.it/_casestudies/..%5Cfiles%5C151201012523-548-61.pdf.

6. Media education and community building

We conclude, focusing on the relationship between socialization and the media. This is an issue that has been widely debated, especially to highlight the emerging issues identified as problematic[40]: in a society where traditional landmarks such as family, work and religion are eroding, the agencies of socialization are multiplied, becoming informal and uneven, and the media, end up playing a strong role in the transmission of values for young people.

This evolution has important implications particularly in the construction of social bonds, especially at a local level: ME is identified as one of the foundations for the construction of the democratic community of the future[41]. Its purpose is to provide these groups both skills in the interpretation of messages and the ability to produce texts that can represent the different cultures, especially for the excluded minorities or victims of stereotypes in the mainstream media. Furthermore the tools of online communication such as forums, blogs and social networks have become the creation areas of new global virtual communities, where people who are physically at a distance can get in touch as a result of special interests[42].

In the South American context, reflection on communication, education and community has strongly influenced the creation of ME courses. Taking as reference the theoretical thinking of Paulo Freire[43], ME has been redesigned as a winning form of social intervention, linking the theme of (media) literacy to the right of communication tout court[44]. Following this approach, we can define all the areas of human relationships as «communicational ecosystem», to describe the layout that all environments have in relation to their own information flows and use of communication tools, which determine the relationships between subjects. The family, community and school are «communicational ecosystems» whose balance can be secured by a participatory and democratic management of communication flows. ME is therefore a process of empowerment of the individual to exercise his/her right to speak within the contexts in which he/she lives, and a form of training in openness and being a good listener for that same individual that holds a position of educational leadership over the younger generations. To illustrate this issue, we shall consider the

[40] Morcellini M., *Passaggio al futuro. Formazione e socializzazione tra vecchi e nuovi media*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2000.
[41] See in this regard the recommendations of the Knight Commission on Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy: http://www.knightcomm.org, in particular Hobbs R., *op. cit.*, 2010a
[42] Fabbro F., *La costruzione della partecipazione civica e Internet. Studi di caso nel contesto italiano*, PhD Thesis, University of Verona, 2009.
[43] Freire P., *Pedagogia do oprimido*, Paz e Terra, Rio de Janiero 1970.
[44] Soares I., *Manifiesto de la Educación para la Comunicación de los paises en vías de desarrollo*, La Coruña, 1995.

project «Event art or how to avoid tags»[45], realized by Professor Vincent Meessen, from Saint Luc Secondary Institute in Liege. This training program is designed as a possible methodology for the school to intervene in the ecosystem, and in particular for students to reflect on the need to take care of spaces within the school, which contrary to what is expected are often wasted areas, particularly when we think of the youth practice of producing graphic signatures on walls, namely «tags». In this overall goal, there is also the aim to improve the expressive capabilities of young people, encouraging them to articulate their message and reflect on intentions and methods of communication. Students are asked to choose a topic of interest from newspapers, look into it more thoroughly via the classical literature search on the Internet and ultimately achieve a personal artistic elaborate, to be exposed for the entire school year in the canteen premises. The impact on schools is indisputable, as the project has produced increased respect for the school environment and led to the end of the tagging.

The only prerequisite, Meessen stresses, is the willingness to solve the problem of protection of the structures with the freedom of expression for students, rather than repressive methods, less costly in terms of money, but also less productive. Pupils are characterized, in fact, as being hypersensitive, thrill seekers, idealists who want to be distinguished from the average man, who want to express themselves and lead their own lives: incidents of vandalism are a symptom of a profound inability to communicate, except through elementary forms, as provocative as the tag. This project therefore aims to give voice to students, making them aware of their membership in society and in the school community, which is ready to listen and provide them with the necessary tools and space to express themselves.

[45] The description of the project is available online at: http://www.onair.medmediaeducation.it/_casestudies/..%5Cfiles%5C2512010155422-387-30.pdf.

M. Ranieri

Chapter 6
«To be or not to be… digital teens?». A Study on the Development of Critical Thinking Skills of Adolescents.

1. Introduction

In the last ten years, the image of «digital natives» to depict those generations that grew up on 'bread and bits' has gathered ample success. Authors like Prensky[1] and others[2] have given us a picture of young people born after the 80's as gifted with new cognitive styles and able to deal with great quantities of information critically.

Familiarity with continuous flows of information apparently renders digital natives more skilled in interpreting information and in distinguishing between reliable and unreliable information[3]. In this sense someone has defined them as «net savvy»[4].

[1] Prenksy M., *Digital natives, digital immigrants*, «On the Horizon», 9, 5, 2001a, pp. 1-6, and Prenksy M., *Digital natives, digital immigrants, Part II: Do they really think differently?*, «On the Horizon», 9, 6, 2001b, p. 4.

[2] See Tapscott D., *Growing up digital: The rise of the Net generation*, McGraw-Hill, New York 1998, and Oblinger D., Oblinger J. (Eds.), *Educating the Net generation*, EDUCAUSE, Boulder (CO) 2005.

[3] Veen W., Vrakking B., *Homo Zappiens. Growing up in a digital age*, Network Continuum Education, London 2004.

[4] Levin D., Arafeh S., *The digital disconnect: the widening gap between Internet-savvy students and their schools*, Pew Internet & American Life Project, Washington (DC) 2002.

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In reality, as different sources have remarked[5], young people's familiarity with technology and their technical skills should not deceive us. National and international research studies on a wide scale show that students generally tend to trust the reputed good quality of contents found on the web, revealing scarce critical reflection and passivity, and leaving much up to chance without any kind of source assessment[6].

Thus, judging from the results of these research studies: one is not born, but potentially could become an Internet user… So, what does become an Internet user mean? What specific problems do the Internet and digital media cause, especially for the younger generation? How can we empower young people's ability to critically understand media and online digital contents?

In this chapter, we will deal with these questions and present a didactic activity tested with junior secondary school students aiming at developing forms of critical reflection towards the Internet, as a digital information environment.

2. Credibility and reliability in digital environments

We have stated that one is not born, but potentially could become an Internet user. So, what does become an Internet user mean? The answer can be concise but complex at the same time. Becoming Internet users means acquiring a set of competences, skills and knowledge to read online information and contents critically, to assess their credibility and reliability, to create information rather than just receive it passively. The concept of credibility itself, together with that of reliability is what renders this definition complex. What do we mean when we say that information is credible? What criteria do we have to assess source credibility? Does the concept of credibility change in the digital era? And how does it change?

When we try to reflect on the concept of credibility and similar concepts, we realize that we are dealing with fluid meanings that are difficult to define. An interesting attempt at reconstructing the semantic evolution

[5] Calvani et al., *La competenza digitale nella scuola. Modelli e strumenti per svilupparla e valutarla*, Erickson, Trento 2010; Jacquinot G., *De quelques repérages pour la recherche en education aux médias*, in P. Verniers (Ed.), *EuroMeduc. L'éducation aux medias en Europe. Controverses, défis et perspectives*, EuroMeduc, Bruxelles 2009, pp. 143-151; and Bennett S., Maton K., Kervin L., *The «digital natives» debate. A critical review of the evidence*, «British Journal of Educational Technology», 39, 6, 2008, pp. 775-786.

[6] See e.g. Sutherland-Smith W., *Weaving the literacy Web: Changes in reading from page to screen*, «The Reading Teacher», 55, 7, 2002, pp. 662-669; Eagleton M. B., Guinee K., Langlais K., *Teaching Internet literacy strategies: the hero inquiry project*, «Voices from the Middle», 10, 3, 2003, pp. 28-35; Ravestein J., Ladage C., Johsua S., *Trouver et utiliser des informations sur Internet à l'école: problèmes techniques et questions éthiques*, «Revue française de pédagogie», 158, 2007, pp. 71-83.

of the concept of credibility can be found in Metzger and Flanagin[7], who illustrate that from Aristotle onwards, the theme of credibility has been dealt with from different research perspectives giving also different results, so that today a clear-cut and shared definition of this concept does not exist. Although Aristotle distinguished between three dimensions, that is, ethos (e.g., appeal derived from the orator's characteristics), pathos (e.g., appeal on emotions) and logos (e.g., appeal based on reasoning), ultimately, he maintained that credibility depended on the orator's characteristics. Later, in the 20th century, social psychologists returned to the theme: the Yale Group defined credibility in terms of expertise and reliability and, for the first time, outlined a distinction between source credibility, message credibility and the people's credulity. After, interest in the theme of credibility came from media professionals. Here, the significant discovery was that the more the public depends on the media the more it considers them credible. In other words, media credibility also exists.

A new era of studies on credibility then started towards the end of the last century with the arrival of the Internet and digital media. Within these environments, notions that were previously kept distinct, like source, message and media credibility, are merged together. In particular, the Internet has introduced new significant problems as regards assessment of information credibility/reliability: so, what are the elements that distinguish online information from that transmitted through traditional channels?

First of all, the fact that everybody – provided they have access to digital technology, obviously – can produce digital content and publish it online, even anonymously, is a novelty: who is responsible for the information in this case? How far can a particular piece of information be considered reliable?

Information sources are a very crucial element for judging and assessing credibility. Nevertheless, on the Internet, sources are unclear and ambiguous. Sometimes they are missing, other times they are incomplete and others they are either indecipherable or ambiguous or hidden. A source can be missing because there are no common standards of publication; it can be indecipherable because it refers, for example, to specific situations that are unknown to the majority of readers; it can be confusing or ambiguous because it was produced by more than one person (e.g. Wikipedia: what is the source in this case?) or because it is taken from other sites through aggregators, thus creating a sort of context deficit.

One should also consider that there are no quality controls capable of guaranteeing information reliability, just as there are no common standards for publishing online information: it can easily be modified or plagiarized.

Moreover, the information and media channels convergence can

[7] Metzger M.J., Flanagin A.J. (Eds.), *Digital Media, Youth, and Credibility*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London 2008.

influence credibility judgements, confusing the user on various levels: think of, for example, the «leveling effect»[8], that is, the leveling of information quality due to the way search engine systems present results, with commercial sites and non-commercial ones appearing together on the same page.

In brief, abundance, lack of quality control, fragmentary nature, context deficit, disintermediation and so on transfer onto the user most of the cognitive work, necessary to assess online information credibility and reliability[9].

At the same time, in social networks, new mechanisms of establishing credibility through new forms of social approval are emerging, which compensate for the anonymous nature typical of digital environments. In their careful analysis of the problem, Metzger and Flanagin[10] indicate four new strategies: *conferred credibility*, which depends on the positive reputation of the person or entity that recommends a source; *tabulated credibility*, which is based on peer ratings that are tabulated to give a metric for quality or credibility of an aspect of an individual, organization or product; *reputed credibility*, which is based on the reputation a person or an organization has within a social network; and finally *emergent credibility*, which springs from the work of people or social groups who collaborate in an open environment to create repositories of digital resources (e.g. Wikipedia).

What impact do these characteristics of digital information have on young people? What competences are necessary to assess online information credibility?

Online information credibility is particularly problematic and more dangerous with young people. First of all, younger generations use the Internet to research information more than adults: young people are «big consumers» of digital information and very often it is their only source. Moreover, their perception of the risk factor can be lower because they do not deem themselves as possessors of sensitive data (e.g. financial information). Their lack of life experience makes it difficult for them to understand some of the mechanisms that produce credibility. Apart from their personal experiences, young people are different from adults as regards their cognitive and emotional development[11].

All these elements call for a thorough education to empower critical thinking and forms of higher cognitive reflection, in line with what Dewey said more than a century ago, and more recently Morin.

[8] Burbules N. C., *Digital Texts and Future of Scholarly Writing and Publication*, «Journal of Curriculum Studies», 30, 1, 1998, pp. 105-124.
[9] Ranieri M., *Formazione e cyberspazio. Divari e opportunità nel mondo della rete*, ETS, Pisa 2006.
[10] Metzger M.J., Flanagin A.J. (Eds.), *op.cit.*, 2008.
[11] Eastin M.S., *Toward a Cognitive Developmental Approach to Youth Perceptions of Credibility*, in M. J. Metzger, A.J. Flanagin (Eds.), *op. cit.*, 2008, pp. 29-47.

3. Critical understanding and digital media: a WebQuest on digital teens

«To be or not to be…digital teenagers?» is the title of a learning activity developed under the On Air project which aimed at providing possible educational answers to the issues depicted above. The teaching and learning materials, addressed to secondary school students, were designed and implemented by Marco Guastavigna and Maria Ranieri and then tested in an Italian school. The purpose of the activity was to enhance students' critical understanding of media messages, especially online contents available on the web, and develop awareness of and reflection on reading and writing even different types of media. The focus on diverse media was based on a cross-media approach to the issue of digital communication. The idea behind the activity was that to develop critical thinking is important to consider different needs on the basis of relevance, extension, and intensity, or on the basis of the presence of a target and the use of spoken language.

The teaching model of the activity was inspired by the WebQuest model[12], a teaching method derived from Inquiry-Based-Learning, where students are asked to accomplish a task using a given set of Internet resources and also other digital resources found, selected and evaluated by them. The topic proposed as a field of inquiry was how media (TV, newspapers, the Web) represent teenagers and their relationship with digital media in order to promote students' reflection on their own relationship with the Internet.

Figure 1 – The Home Page of the WebQuest «To be or not to be…digital teenagers?»

[12] Dodge B., *Some Thoughts About WebQuests*, e-paper, 1997: http://webquest.sdsu.edu/about_webquests.html.

The activities in the unit were organized in four main phases[13]:

First phase – Searching the Internet and refining keywords

Initially students were provided with a set of online sources about the relationship between adolescents and digital media to be explored. Then, they were asked to extend the initial set of resources through the search for further information using the internal search engines of the BBC or La Repubblica and You Tube. In order to develop students' awareness of the search strategies carried out to locate new online resources, pupils were given a reviewing tool to note down keywords used for the search, the number of obtained results and comments.

Second phase – Analyzing and comparing Internet sources

Once a certain number of websites and resources were collected students had to analyze, compare and evaluate the information retrieved with the aim of selecting relevant and credible information, and discovering views and values, implicit representation of adolescents and so on.

Third phase – Organizing and summarizing information found

At the end of the analysis and evaluation process, students were asked to build up a mind map, and then synthesize the information selected. In order to help the students, they were provided with a document about mind maps as tools to structure ideas and concepts, and a draft of a mind map as a starting point to organize the information found during the search and selection process.

Fourth phase- Creating cross-media contents

As a final output students were requested to prepare a presentation of the synthesis in a variety of communicative formats such as oral presentations, power point presentations, editing of a post in a blog, writing of an article for the newspaper. A help tool for this phase was a document about the fundamental rules of journalism.

As regards evaluation, three levels were considered: students' satisfaction, learning results (students' productions and contributions) and change of perceptions and representations. For each level a specific assessment tool was created (see below, Appendix n. 1).

The activity was experimented in the province of Massa (Italy), in a junior secondary school, during the period April-May 2010. 18 students

[13] For a complete description of the activities carried out and the tools used during the process see below, Appendix n. 1.

were involved. The activity was carried out in the computer room and was managed by the Maths teacher and two researchers[14].

As only 16 hours (2 h. per week) were available rather than 24 h (the time planned for the overall activity), the fourth phase was shortened including only the writing of a paper.

A combination of several tools was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching learning activity. On one hand, one of the researchers kept a journal of the results, taking notes on the process, trying to highlight the moments where the students were more engaged and the critical situations. On the other hand, data about students' reaction, learning and change were gathered.

At the beginning and at the end students were asked to fill out a questionnaire to self-evaluate their behaviour and perceptions towards the Internet. The questionnaire included the following questions: (1) «How do you select Internet resources and web sites?», (2) «Do you think the information on the Internet is neutral? If yes, please justify. If no, why», (3) «When you have to write an essay on a topic, do you consider only Internet sources or not? If not, what other types of sources do you take into account», and (4) «Do you know how search engines work? How do they influence the results?». The answers given at the beginning were compared with those given at the end in order to find out whether their perception and behaviour towards media had changed.

A satisfaction questionnaire was also administered to evaluate students' reaction to the project. In particular, the students individually evaluated the whole activity proposed by the WebQuest giving their impressions and opinions. They also evaluated the work group through another rubric.

To evaluate their learning both single students and groups were taken into account, evaluating the final products on the basis of a set of criteria that will be explained below.

4. Evidence and feedback. Some results

Although this was a small study, we gathered considerable amount of data as often happens with qualitative approaches. Thanks to deep observation by researchers, through the use of questionnaires with open-ended items, and the analysis of students' productions and constant conversations with the teacher, at the end of the experience we obtained a lot of information, which deserved to be analyzed.

Briefly: what were the main outcomes of the experiences? What issues emerged? Did the students reveal any attitudes towards the Internet? How did the students react and how did the teacher react?

[14] The observations and the research analysis were made by Maria Ranieri and Sabina Guadagni, a student who was writing her thesis supervised by Maria Ranieri.

Process

We shall start by focusing on the process. Overall there were two main critical moments during the activity, one on a technical level with some consequences on students' concentration, and the other on a more cognitive level.

First of all, many of the technical tools used were obsolete. Trouble with Internet browsing, due to slow connection, and old computers sometimes made it difficult for the pupils to concentrate and for the teachers to manage the activities and maintain the attention on the objectives. This confirms that when using equipment that is not good enough and technical support is not assured, technologies turn into obstacles for learning rather than facilitators.

Secondly, the task of creating a conceptual map on the topic revealed students' difficulty to manage and summarize all the fragmented information found on the Internet. When students were requested to plan and organize a map of the several disconnected data collected, they had difficulties in making a brief summary of the different elements. The teachers had to address them several times on how to structure the map, and finally they managed the task correctly.

Another task, which required high cognitive efforts from the pupils, was the writing of the article. After the selection of information in the articles searched on the web, especially in «La Repubblica» (an Italian newspaper), students had difficulties to connect information and write a coherent article. Even in this case, the challenge for the students was in finding connections and structuring information, which asked for teacher support and guidance.

However, throughout the process, students showed a interest in the topic and a good participation level. They were active in asking and answering questions to be discussed, and collaborated by working together, in pairs, and mutually supporting each other.

Figure 2 – Activities carried out in the classroom

We cannot rule out that the great interest and motivation shown by the students was a consequence of the «novelty effect». However, a comparison of what emerged from the observation of students' behaviour with the results of the satisfaction questionnaire, which will be discussed below, shows that despite the difficulties the students had, the experience really engaged them in the use of a medium that they do not really know very well. It seems that they ask for 'more education' on that side.

Students' Reaction

At a first reading it seems that the students' answers to the satisfaction questionnaire administered at the end correspond to what was noticed during the process, i.e. students had difficulties with synthesizing information in a paper. In fact, most of the students answered that surfing the net was more enjoyable than writing an article. In particular, pupils appreciated not only browsing the web but all the activities related to the use of the Internet (search of information, analysis of resources, comparing references, evaluation and selection), explaining in their own words that «surfing the Internet is fun».

Indeed, during the searching phase, considering the nature of the questions asked by the students and their doubts, and the need for the teacher and the researchers to intervene frequently to provide clarifications, we found out that the pupils had a confused idea of certain concepts such as searching, analyzing, comparing, and evaluating Internet resources.

As is commonly known, surfing the Internet, requires specific skills to know what questions to ask and to make associations apart from being able to judge the relevance of the information found, in order to organize and structure it. However, our students did not seem to be used to media-oriented way of thinking and had difficulties in finding the common train of thought in the information collected, probably due to their young age or because they are not used to surfing the net. For example, they found it difficult to think of other keywords, apart from those given by WebQuest to start the search. During their search through the «La Republica» articles, they did not manage to select the ones relevant to their task, but they tended to focus on aspects they considered interesting, but which were irrelevant to the topic they were working on. Though the web attracts them a lot, it did not prove to be a comfortable and effective tool for any of them to construct the sense generally required by WebQuest. Therefore, to avoid dispersion, in many situations, it was often necessary to redirect the group back to the objectives of the research, by helping the students in the selection of information, thus making sure that they all focused better on the search topic.

Besides surfing the Internet, another activity students declared to be enjoyable was the creation of a conceptual map. Probably this was due to

the fact that after their early feeling of dispersion, they managed to get an initial understanding of the topic through the construction of the map, having had to make a cognitive effort to sort out the information under the given headings.

The activities that students liked least were writing the articles and analysing keywords, considered «boring» by some and «too difficult» by others. This could be due to abundance and the difficulty of the articles found on the topic «Media and Young People». Pupils found it difficult to decide which page to open and were probably disoriented. Moreover, the meta-cognitive effort required to refine the research through the «Collecting and reviewing keywords» tool (see below Appendix n. 1) was perceived as too high.

Another question regarded students' understanding of the purpose of the activity. Half of the students gave answers such as: «The objective is to understand the relation between adolescents and media», or «To let us know how young people use the Internet, chat, and MSN», showing an understanding of the objective of the course. Others students gave answers like: «The aim of the activity is to teach us to use computers», or «These activities teach us how to look for websites», thus referring only to the instrumental use of media.

The last question of the Satisfaction Questionnaire was: «Would you repeat this experience again? If yes, why?». Despite the difficulties, all the pupils answered in a positive way, perceiving the web as a stimulating place with a huge quantity of useful information. As an example, M. wrote: «Yes, I would repeat this experience because going on the Internet is great», or another answer was: «Yes, because on the Internet I learn many new things». The satisfaction questionnaire showed that for some pupils accessing the Internet at school is a unique opportunity and that there is great need of guided use of the Internet to make critical decisions about the information retrieved. A. for example wrote: «Yes, I would like to go on the Internet again at school because I don't have it at home and I would love to learn how to use it», or also: «Yes, I would like to go on the Internet more often, but I don't know how to use it well, and sometimes it is dangerous».

To conclude, the representation of the Internet that emerged from the students' answers involves different levels of curiosity, interest, disorientation, and stereotypes. It is up to the teachers and educators, as well as parents to develop specific competences in using the Internet, not so much as regards technical skills, but rather as regards a more critical and aware use of the media. The problem then becomes an educational matter and the solution will be the one specified by ME of not forbidding, but rather suggesting and promoting an aware use of the medium where kids become protagonists of an active growing process.

Students' Productions

Students were asked to achieve several tasks during the activity, each centring on a key aspect of the process of understanding online contents and creating their own content, that is searching and evaluating information, summarizing and structuring it to create a piece of content. What were the outcomes of these activities?

We shall summarize the results by looking at three main student productions, i.e. reviewing keywords, building up a map and writing a paper.

As regards the first product, let's remember that, once the pupils finished visiting the given sources, they were asked to search for more sources through the «La Repubblica» and YouTube search engines. They were asked to write down the keywords they considered useful for their research on the topic of young people and the media in the «Collecting and reviewing keywords» tool (see below Appendix n. 1), then reflect on their relevance and in case refine them. The criteria adopted for the evaluation of this activity were the number of pertinent keywords identified and the types of comments added to explain the keywords choices, showing the level of awareness reached.

Overall, pupils showed difficulties in finding keywords by themselves and were able to improve the search only partially by adding new keyword terms like: «adolescence-web», «adolescence-MSN», and «boys-YouTube», with the help of the teacher. As regards comments and explanation they included some general considerations such as «There is a lot of information», or «There are very helpful articles» (see below Appendix n. 2).

The creation of the mind map on young people and digital media required the students to organize information around five main dimensions: «risk», «benefits», «environment», «tools», and «habits». The maps were assessed on the basis of the following criteria: (1) extent, (2) completeness, (3) accuracy, and (4) pertinence.

Maps revealed some interesting information. The conceptual maps show that young people are not completely naïve about the risks associated with the Net, probably because influenced by adult ideas. The entire group of students recognized risks which they defined with words like pornography and paedophilia. Some state that the major risk is meeting strangers in chat rooms. Others emphasize the problem of the possible existence of deceptive websites and others believe that the only risk is that of becoming a victim of a virus attack. On the whole, the conceptual maps were accurate and adequate, even though not totally exhaustive.

As regards the evaluation of the article, the criteria adopted were: (1) exhaustive information, (2) lexical accuracy, (3) clear ideas and structures, (4) effective communication and style.

As said before, pupils needed to be supported by the teacher to elaborate the paper and the result at the end was very positive.

Students' Contribution to the Group

Students were also asked to self-evaluate their contribution to the group through the filling in of a rubric, whose indicators were related to (1) participation, (2) responsibility, (3) discussion, (4) sharing information, (5) sharing solutions, and (6) negotiation[15], and that was based on a scale ranging from «Exemplary», to «Proficient», to «Partially Proficient» to «Incomplete».

The majority of the students, as emerged from the rubric results, placed themselves in the «Proficient» level for all the indicators. For example, in the case of participation almost all the pupils have a high perception of their own contribution, recognizing themselves in: «Focuses on the task and what needs to be done most of the time. Other group members can count on this person». Only a few students see themselves as: «Sometimes a satisfactory group member who does what is required».

On the whole, students have a positive image of their personal contributions to the sharing of information and to collaborative problem solving, and they also perceive themselves as responsible towards their peers. However it must be noted that sometimes students' representations are an overestimated picture of what actually happened. At least, researchers and teachers noted a less positive situation with some students contributing much less than what they declared.

Changes in Students' Attitudes and Perceptions

As regards students' representations of the Internet, when comparing the answers given by the students before and after the experience, some differences deserving attention emerge.

From the answers obtained before the educational experience some main points emerged pertaining to two dimensions: technology and critical thinking. As regards the technological dimension, we noticed that even though pupils very often use Google, they have no idea of how a search engine works. Almost all the pupils revealed that they have no idea about what exactly a search engine is, and how it influences the results. The majority of the students tend to use only the information on the first page of the results. Few students who go on Google, «Think about and then write the exact keywords to receive the useful information, and after select only what best fits the needs», or «Among several pieces of information select only the most appropriate for the purpose».

As regards critical thinking, we can notice that pupils have confused ideas about the neutrality of information: more than half of the students declared they do not doubt the reliability and credibility of the information found

[15] We used a rubric created by Franker K. (2007), which is available at the following URL: http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/academicaffairs/assessment/strategies/teamwork.pdf.

on the Internet. They answered that «Information is neutral because when I look for a word I always find the correct answer» or «Yes, information is neutral because on Google and on Wikipedia there is everything I look for».

Only a minority of students gave negative answers such as: «Information is not neutral, because many people create fake websites on the Internet» or «No, because on Google you may find incorrect information» or «No, because everyone has access to the Internet, and much of the information can be false».

Finally, before starting the educational activity the majority of pupils considered information found on any website as valid as if it were found in a book, or in an encyclopedia; few pupils doubted whether information on the Internet was always credible or reliable.

The same questionnaire was administered at the end of the experience. The results showed that there still was a bit of confusion about the knowledge of search engines, or of how information is given, but there was a significant change about how students perceive the neutrality of information on the Internet. Most of the pupils, who previously answered that online information was neutral and credible, now changed their minds: «No, information is not neutral because on the Internet no one checks site contents» or «No, because on the Internet there is a lot of fake information», or «Information on the Internet is not regarded as being true like in books, simply because everyone can write their thoughts on the Internet». Significantly M. who in the first questionnaire wrote: «Information on the Internet is neutral because when I look for a word on Google or Wikipedia I find what I am looking for, and the meaning that I find is correct», in the second questionnaire she wrote «Information on Google is not always neutral because there are so many websites I have to be careful, because the information I find can sometimes not be true».

These differences between answers before and after the activity seem to be a positive result suggesting that pupils started a deeper reflection around the issue of source credibility of online information and contents. This would suggest that even a short experience – if well supported – may influence and even change students' perceptions of the Internet and their relationship with information.

Feedback from the teacher

Just a few words on the teacher's reaction. At the end of the experience, in the evaluation of the students' products, the teacher expressed a high level of satisfaction for the opportunity provided by the project. In particular, she was surprised by the possible educational value of the Internet and its potential for the development of students' critical thinking. Before she could not see surfing the web as a useful activity with learning results, but now, thanks to the teaching material provided in the project, she could

understand the challenges of digital information and their educational implications. Moreover, she realized how important support by educators is to develop the pupils' critical thinking towards media, and to make them more aware of how vast digital information is.

During the several steps the teacher recognized the high learning value of the proposed approach, and the school headmaster expressed his will to repeat the experience and make the use of the web by pupils become a more common experience.

5. Conclusion

The considerable impact that digital information today has on our lives requires more refined competences to critically understanding information. In the digital era, information is increasingly fragmentary, lacking context and having ambiguous sources. At the same time, the growing complexity that characterizes today's systems of creating credibility in digital environments demands an urgent and deep reflection on the underlying mechanisms and on the new strategies of assessing information that are being developed on online networks. A study of these mechanisms has just started and a lot still has to be done.

On one hand, research on the media should provide useful elements for a better understanding of the transformations underway. On the other, ME still remains an important solution to help younger generations make use of digital contents critically. At school first of all, but also in other contexts, development of competences to critically understand information should be a priority of 21st century education. The experience we have presented here, though limited in time and number of participants, is indicative of how far we still have to go: «one is not born, but rather becomes an Internet user», and because of this, the intervention of the school and other educational institutions is fundamental.

Appendix N. 1

«To be or not to be … digital teenagers?»
A WebQuest about teens on the Net

Overall description

Section n. 1: General information about the author	
Name of Author	Marco Guastavigna, Maria Ranieri
Name of Institution	*ISS Beccari, Turin *Faculty of Education, University of Florence
Role	Marco Guastavigna, Teacher Maria Ranieri, Researcher

Section n. 2: Overall description of the learning activity	
Title	«To be or not to be … digital teenagers»
Target population	Students aged 13-16
Time	24 hours
Curriculum	Italian, Social Studies and ICT, Visual Education
Equipment needed	10 PCs and Internet connection
Resources and staffing	N. 1 teacher. No supplementary budget is needed.
Pre-requisites	Students should be able to: • surf the Internet; • use a keywords search engine; • use the essential functions of a word processor and of a software to create digital presentations, • use software for social networking.
Learning purposes	The purposes of the learning activity presented here are, first, to stimulate and develop students' critical thinking in approaching media, especially the Internet, and second to promote their capacity of writing media by creating online multimedia products. Nowadays, one of the main challenges media educators have to face is to make children and teenagers learn to critically understand the oversized world of online digital information. As is commonly known, the information overload issue along with the problem of quality of information on the Internet are increasingly raising some big questions such as: • How to evaluate online information credibility and reliability? • How to identify and assess information sources? This points out an emerging need for cyber-literacy, where the Internet, its contents and narratives become the object of a necessary critical analysis and understanding. Besides that, the module aims at promoting students' creativity and ability to create digital products according to their own specific languages and grammars. The focus on different media is grounded on a cross-media approach to the issue of digital communication. The idea is that to completely develop critical thinking it is useful to cope with different communicative needs in terms of, for example, conceptual density, extension and intensity, or on the basis of receiver's presence or absence, and on whether oral language is used or not

Learning objectives	The specific learning objectives of the module can by classified as below: A) Knowledge: • to get deeper knowledge on the Internet and its functioning • to develop knowledge about the different media formats currently available on the Internet • to explore the world of teens through the information found on the Internet; B) Skills and abilities • to be able to identify, analyze and assess sources • to be able to compare different sources • to be able to identify theses and arguments • to be able to identify different points of view • to be able to synthesize a variety of sources • to be able to logically organize data and information • to be able to use the different grammars of digital media
Instructional Methods	The module is based on the WebQuest technique, a teaching method which is inspired by Inquiry-Based-Learning. IBL is a pedagogical approach grounded on constructivism and focusing on the active participation of learners in the learning process. The idea is that learners build their own learning through a progressive process of problem solving, where the cycle of problem-hypothesis-test characterizes the whole activity. Another approach, which characterizes this module, is cooperative learning. Students are divided in small and heterogeneous groups to work together to solve the WebQuest problem/task.
Structure	This module mainly focuses on the Internet and its multimedia resources. Students are asked to analyze a predefined set of Internet resources about the relationship between teens and digital media, and also integrate the original set of digital resources with other information on the same topic searched by them. Students have to analyze sources, compare them, identify visions and values, detect implicit teen representations etc. At the end of analysis, students are asked to summarize what they have found, and produce different multimedia products to express their understanding of the issue. As noted above, the teaching/learning process is based on the WebQuest, which has a well-defined structure that has been described by Dodge[16] from the San Diego State University. As Dodge indicated, a WebQuest should contain the following sections: 1. an introduction which provides background information; 2. an achievable and interesting task; 3. a set of information sources necessary to complete the task or some initial inputs so that students can then search for supplementary sources; 4. a description of the steps the learners should go through to accomplishing the task; 5. some suggestions and hints to guide students to organize and structure information, under the form of guiding questions, concept maps, or cause-and-effect diagrams; 6. a conclusion that reminds the students about what they have learned, and stimulates them to expand their knowledge into other domains.

[16] Dodge B., *Some Thoughts About WebQuests,* e-paper, 1997: http://webquest.sdsu.edu/about_webquests.html.

Documentation Tools	The process is documented through different tools both by the students and the teacher. As regards students, the products realized during the activity can be considered as documents and proofs of the ongoing process. The products taken into account will be: mind maps; papers; multimedia slide presentations; blog posts; and reviews on keywords. As regards the teacher, a journal describing the main events of the process will be collected.
Assessment/ Evaluation Tools	As regards evaluation, three main levels will be considered: Level 1 – Reaction: On this level a student satisfaction questionnaire will be administered to the students in order to evaluate their own level of satisfaction. Level 2 – Learning: On this level, learning will be evaluated considering individual and group work by testing learning outcomes, evaluating the final products and using a rubric for team work. Level 3 – Transfer: On this level, change in perceptions and attitudes towards media will be assessed by administering a pre- and a post-test.
Website	The online version of the activity is available in Italian at the following URL: http://www.noiosito.it/med/wqita. The online version of the activity is available in English at the following URL: http://www.noiosito.it/med/wqen.

Section n. 3: Analytical description of the structure of the learning activity	
Stages	Teaching and learning activities
Stage n. 1	Time: 2 h Room: Computer lab with PC connected to the Internet Aims: To introduce the WebQuest and the relative tasks Modality: Individual and pair work Activities: Before starting, teacher administers a pre-test to explore students' perceptions about media. Then teacher introduces the activity explaining what is a WebQuest and presenting the general topic of «To be or not to be…digital teenagers?». Students are asked to individually read the introduction of the WebQuest and visit the resources included in the introduction as a stimulus in pairs. At this stage, students should reach a clear understanding of the task.
Stage n. 2	Time: 2 h Room: Computer lab with PC connected to the Internet Aims: To explore and analyze the Internet resources included in the WebQuest and search for other resources by refining keywords to be used. Modality: Pair work Activities: In pairs, students start to visit and analyze the web sites suggested in the WebQuest and also search for other resources by using the BBS News and You Tube internal search engines. During the process they have to take note of the keywords they are using for their searches in the «Colleting and reviewing keywords» tool.
Stage n. 3	Time: 2 h Room: Computer lab with PC connected to the Internet Aims: To analyze, assess and compare the Internet resources found on the topic of digital teens. Modality: Pair work Activities: In pairs students have to analyze, assess and compare the Internet resources found on the topic of digital teens. They should try to explore points of view, bias, values and visions included in the digital resources to critically understand their meanings.

Stage n. 4	Time: 4 h Room: Computer lab with PC connected to the Internet Aims: To create a mental map in order to organize data and information on the topic. Modality: Pair work Activities: At this stage, students are asked to start synthesizing and organizing information found by creating a mental map on the topic «Teenagers and digital media». They are asked to read a short presentation of what a mental map is and then they are given a pre-arranged map on the topic with five main sub-subjects, i.e. environments, tools, habits, benefits and risks.
Stage n. 5	Time: 4 h Room: Computer lab with PC connected to the Internet Aims: To create and test a multimedia presentation with oral description. Modality: Group work Activities: Students are divided in small groups with different roles so that each one will have an active function in the group. In this phase, they have to summarize information in another format, i.e. by using visual communication 'grammar' and oral discourse 'grammar'. A group of peers will evaluate the quality of the multimedia presentation with the oral description on the basis of pre-fixed criteria.
Stage n. 6	Time: 4 h Room: Computer lab with PC connected to the Internet Aims: To write an article Modality: Group work Activities: Students are divided in small groups with different roles so that each one will have an active function in the group. In this phase, they have to summarize information in another format, i.e. by writing an article for a real or hypothetical school newspaper. Before writing the paper, they are asked to read the document «The 5 Ws of the Journalism».
Stage n. 7	Time: 2 h Room: Computer lab with PC connected to the Internet Aims: To create a blog's post Modality: Group work Activities: Students are divided in small groups with different roles so that each one will have an active function in the group. In this phase, they have to summarize information in another format, i.e. by writing a post to be published in a blog.
Stage n. 8	Time: 2 h Room: Computer lab with PC connected to the Internet Aims: To review keywords Modality: Pair work Activities: In pairs students have to reflect on their own research strategies. To do that they are asked to review and comment the keywords they used to search additional resources on the topic of digital teens. For this activity they can use the «Colleting and reviewing keywords» tool.
Stage n. 9	Time: 2 h Room: Classroom Aims: To evaluate the learning activities carried out Modality: Individually and in small groups Activities: At the end of the activity students are asked to evaluate the activity by expressing their feelings on the WebQuest (Students Satisfaction Questionnaire). They also have to self-evaluate the group work by using the rubric. All the products are assessed by the teacher through the «Product Evaluation Form». The post- test administered at the beginning will be applied again at the end.

Section n. 4: Documentation and Evaluation Tools	
Attachment n. 1	«The teacher jornal»: this tool asks teachers to take notes about the process in a structured way, i.e. before-during-after the lesson. Teachers should observe students' participation, note down criticalities, take note of students' results etc.
Attachment n. 2	«Students' Satisfaction Questionnaire»: this questionnaire aims at evaluating students' feelings about the experience. It will be administered at the end of the process.
Attachment n. 3	«Product Evaluation Form»: this tool refers to the students' productions and indicates criteria to evaluate the different digital products created by students. It should be used by the teacher at the end of the activity, but it is recommended to explain the evaluation criteria to the students before the activities start.
Attachment n. 4	«Rubric for Group Work»: this tool concerns the group work results in terms of participation and indicates criteria to evaluate effective collaboration. It should be used by the students themselves at the end of the activity, but teachers are recommended to explain the evaluation criteria to the students before the activities start.
Attachment n. 5	«Pre-Test/Post-Test»: this questionnaire aims at assessing students' attitudes towards media. It will be administered before and after the learning experience in order to evaluate changes and transformations.

Section n. 5: Other tools (if any)	
Attachment A	«What is a mental map?»: this is a short presentation of the main functions of mental maps with some tips on the way to build them. Before starting the search on the Net, students should be invited to read it.
Attachment B	«The 5W of Journalism»: here the 5 rules of writing an article are reminded with examples and suggestions. Students can read it during the process.
Attachment C	«Collecting and reviewing keywords»: this tool should facilitate students in the collection of keywords. Before starting the search on the net, students should be invited to reflect on it and then to use it during the process.

Evaluation Tools and Instruments. Some Examples

The Student Satisfaction Questionnaire	
Name of the School	
Date	
Title of the educational module	
Country	

1. What activities were most enjoyable to you?

1 ❑ Presentation of the WebQuest (phases and topic)
2 ❑ Identifying keywords
3 ❑ Searching Internet resources
4 ❑ Analyzing Internet resources
5 ❑ Comparing Internet resources
6 ❑ Evaluating and selecting Internet resources
7 ❑ Creating a mental map
8 ❑ Creating a multimedia presentation with oral explanation
9 ❑ Writing an article
10 ❑ Writing a blog post
11 ❑ Reflecting on keywords used to search resources

Please, explain why

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2. What activities were least enjoyable to you?

1 ❑ Presentation of the WebQuest (phases and topic)
2 ❑ Identifying keywords
3 ❑ Searching Internet resources
4 ❑ Analyzing Internet resources
5 ❑ Comparing Internet resources
6 ❑ Evaluating and selecting Internet resources
7 ❑ Creating a mental map
8 ❑ Creating a multimedia presentation with oral explanation
9 ❑ Writing an article
10 ❑ Writing a blog post
11 ❑ Reflecting on keywords used to search resources

Please, explain why

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3. What activities were least difficult to you?

1 ❑ Presentation of the WebQuest (phases and topic)
2 ❑ Identifying keywords
3 ❑ Searching Internet resources
4 ❑ Analyzing Internet resources
5 ❑ Comparing Internet resources
6 ❑ Evaluating and selecting Internet resources
7 ❑ Creating a mental map
8 ❑ Creating a multimedia presentation with oral explanation
9 ❑ Writing an article
10 ❑ Writing a blog post
11 ❑ Reflecting on keywords used to search resources

Please, explain why

.....

4. What activities were most difficult to you?

1 ❑ Presentation of the WebQuest (phases and topic)
2 ❑ Identifying keyword
3 ❑ Searching Internet resources
4 ❑ Analyzing Internet resources
5 ❑ Comparing Internet resources
6 ❑ Evaluating and selecting Internet resources
7 ❑ Create a mental map
8 ❑ Create a multimedia presentation with oral explanation
9 ❑ Writing an article
10 ❑ Writing a blog's post
11 ❑ Reflecting on keywords used to search resources

Please, explain why

.....

5. What was working with your peers like?

1 ❑ Positive
2 ❑ Indifferent
3 ❑ Negative
4 ❑ Other (please, specify)

Please, explain why

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6. How was your participation in work group activities?

1 ❑ Less active
2 ❑ Active
3 ❑ Very active
4 ❑ Important to the group

Please, explain why

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7. Was the realization of a final product important to you?

1 ❑ Yes
2 ❑ No

If yes, how much?
1 ❑ Fundamental
2 ❑ Very important
1 ❑ Important
2 ❑ Other (please, specify)

If yes, why?

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8. What do you think was the purpose of this educational activity?

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9. If you could change some of the activities to improve them, how would you change them?

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10. Would you repeat the experience?

1 ❑ If yes, why?

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2 ❑ If no, why?

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Product Evaluation Form	
Name of the School	
Name of the Teacher/s	
Name of the Student/s	
Type of product	
Country	

Rate the project/experience on each item below using a 1-2-3-4-5 scale, with 1 = Low and 5 = High.

PRODUCT: Keyword Reviewing					
Amount of pertinent keywords					
Awareness reached in comments					
Comments					

PRODUCT: Mind Map					
Extent					
Completeness					
Accuracy					
Pertinence					
Comments					

PRODUCT: Article					
Exhaustive information					
Lexical accuracy					
Clear ideas and structures					
Effective communication and style					
Comments					

Pre-Test / Post-Test

1. How do you select Internet resources and web sites?

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2. Do you think that information on the Internet is neutral?
If yes, please justify. If no, why?

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3. When you have to write an essay on a topic, do you consider only Internet sources or not? If no, what other types of sources do you take into account?

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4. Do you know how search engines work? How do they influence research results?

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Working Tools and Instruments. Some examples

Collecting and Reviewing Keywords Form	
Keyword reviewing tool used during the searching phase within the You Tube internal search engine	
Keywords	
Search field (Videos-Channels)	
Number of results	
Pertinence of the results compared to the research objectives	
Reflections Corrections Refinement	
Other notes and comments	
Keyword reviewing tool used during the searching phase within the BBC or «La Repubblica» internal search engine	
Keywords	
Search field	
Use of at least one (if possible)	
Time constraints (if any)	
Number of results	
Pertinence of the results compared to the research objectives	
Reflections Corrections Refinement	
Other notes and comments	

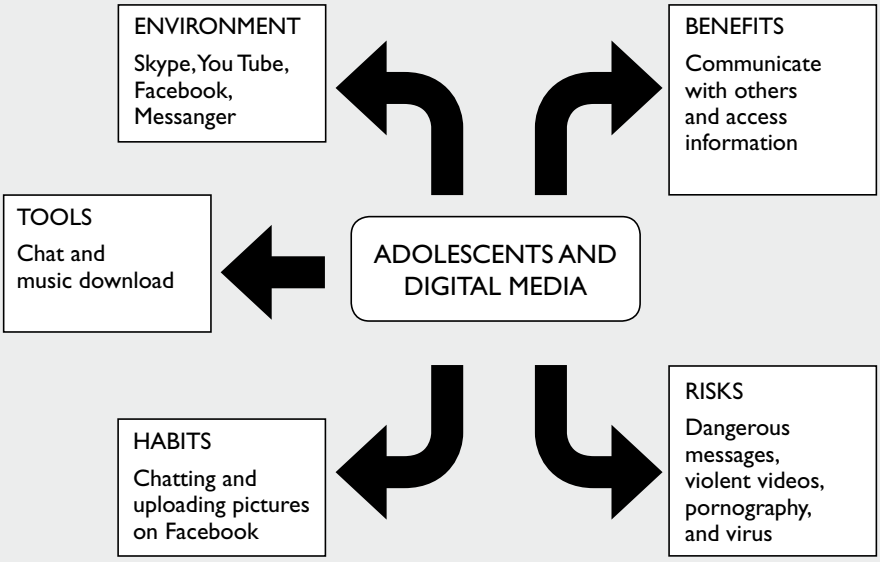
Mind Map – The five dimensions suggested as the starting point for the construction of a mind map

Appendix N. 2

An example of a keyword reviewing tool used for You Tube searching	
Keywords	Adolescents and the web
Search field (Videos-Channels)	Videos, Channels
Number of results	442, 0
Pertinence of the results compared to the research objectives: yes, no, partially	YES
Reflections, Corrections Refinement	Many foreign videos
Other notes and comments	
Keywords	Students and You Tube
Search field	Videos, Channels
Number of results	9.260, 9
Pertinence of the results compared to the research objectives: yes, No, Partially	NO
Reflections, Corrections Refinement	Many videos on many different topics
Other notes and comments	
Keywords	Adolescents and MSN
Search field	Videos, Channels
Number of results	94, 0
Pertinence of the results compared to the research objectives: yes, No, Partially	
Reflections, Corrections Refinement	Many foreign videos
Other notes and comments	

An example of a keyword reviewing tool used for La Repubblica searching	
Keywords	Adolescents and the web
Search field	La Repubblica
Use of at least one (if possible)	NO
Time constraints (if any)	From 2000 until today
Number of results	242
Pertinence of the results compared to the research objectives: yes, no, partially	YES
Reflections, Corrections Refinement	Many interesting articles
Other notes and comments	

Keywords	Students and You Tube
Search field	La Repubblica
Use of at least one (if possible)	NO
Time constraints (if any)	From 2000
Number of results	74
Pertinence of the results compared to the research objectives: yes, no, partially	PARTIALLY
Reflections, Corrections Refinement	Many interesting articles
Other notes and comments	
Keywords	Adolescents and MSN
Search field	La Repubblica
Use of at least one (if possible)	NO
Time constraints (if any)	From 2000 until today
Number of results	13
Pertinence of the results compared to the research objectives: yes, no, partially	NO
Reflections, Corrections Refinement	There is a great paper
Other notes and comments	



An example of a Mind Map

B. Weyland
P. Carboni

Chapter 7[1]
«My You Tube». An Experience on Consumption Awareness of Media and Online Identity Building

1. Identity and participation in the digital age

A new nomadism characterizes the digital era. It has nothing to do with physical movements in real spaces, but it involves an invisible space, made up of networks and circuits, where skills, knowledge, and media objects are moving quickly between continents, generating a new concept of time. This new notion of time appears to be «erratic, transversal, plural, indefinite», without borders, full of twists and exchanges[2].

Today the web is a platform that not only offers software services and the possibility to access data from multiple sources, but also allows users to create their own contents and participate actively in the development of the web[3]. While web 1.0 was in the hands of people controlling software and applications, thus providing users with data and contents, «through web 2.0 people who before were called 'users' [...] have now the opportunity to become involved by participating directly in contents' production»[4].

Due to its potential the network is characterized mainly as a place that facilitates knowledge sharing and construction. However, the web should

[1] The authors jointly conceived the chapter, but Beate Weyland edited sections 5 and 6, and Paolo Carboni sections 1, 2, 3 and 4.
[2] Levy P., *Collective intelligence: mankind´s emerging world in cyberspace*, Perseus Book, Cambridge (MA) 1997.
[3] Prati G., *Web 2.0. Internet è cambiato*, Uniservice, Roma 2007, p. 15.
[4] Di Bari R., *L'era della Web Communication*, Tangram Edizioni Scientifiche, Trento 2010, pp. 58-59.

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not be considered an inherently participatory environment because it supports participation only when there is a clear intention in this sense. Participation in web 2.0 takes place when specific actions or initiatives are promoted by specific communities on the basis of ties and relationships that combine democracy and communication. At the same time, online participation presumes openness of minds and the subject's availability to be influenced by other points of view as well as the will to meet each others in virtual spaces that offer opportunities for exchange and sharing[5].

Today we increasingly express our views on various topics, and share insightful and useful information that have been collectively constructed on the network. The opportunities to contact and interact with other people are now increasing, and as a consequence visibility, aggregation, and mutual influence increasingly act to promote a «reality generated through the collaboration of the individuals who entered the net as authors of their 'own things' and seekers of 'things of others'»[6].

The network can therefore take the form of a plural subject, providing immersive experiences and different types of content, thus becoming «a wide and open environment, where thousands of different people meet and exchange needs and desires, ideas and issues»[7]. The inhabitants of the network are indeed linked by common interests and affinities rather than geographical or physical proximity. This new space calls for new identities, i.e. digital identities. A digital identity should allow individuals to be identified as unique person on the web and build virtual relationships with other identities. Contemporary identity, however, as defined by Bauman[8], is «fuzzy, poorly defined, temporary, and doomed to never achieve its form»[9].

The educational challenge is precisely to work on this multifaceted identity and provide young people with the opportunity to explore, experiment, and express their identity in a more aware mode. Such a challenge should allow to give real meaning to the concept of «simulation», where teenagers can create their own duplicate, permanently being able to wear new masks to navigate in the virtual spaces around them, colourful masks with no certainties, which can change frequently, which are additionally complex and flexible[10]. Here exists a significant opportunity for adolescents today. They could make use of the time spent alone with a

[5] Paparella N., *Il progetto educativo*, Volume 2, Armando Editore, Roma 2009, p. 62.
[6] Ardizzone P., Rivoltella P.C., *Media e tecnologia per la didattica*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2008, p. 56.
[7] De Baggis M., *World Wide Web*, Apogeo, Milano 2010, p. 5.
[8] Bauman Z., *Liquid Modernity*, Polity Press, Cambridge 2000.
[9] Granelli A., *Il sé digitale. Identità, memoria, relazioni nell'era della rete*, Guerini e Associati, Milano 2006, p. 106.
[10] Turkle S., *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*, Simon and Schuster, New York 1995; it. ed. *La vita sullo schermo*, Apogeo, Milano 1997.

computer by escaping isolation and passivity, improving their awareness and better defining their own «virtual identities» as well as create new virtual tribes on the net.

A teenager can see his/her own avatar as a virtual friend who undertakes with him/her a 'digital trip' throughout blogs, wikis, and online environments to leave his/her traces in this world made of bits[11] and, at the same time, to be part of a wider culture, coming from the street to the classroom, from school to home, from home to the libraries and so on.

2. Participatory skills and awareness around use

The exponential growth of online communities indicates that young people are interested not only in the use of information, but also in content creating and sharing. Online communities may be created for diverse purposes such as entertainment, meeting other people, learning and cultural exchange. They involve:

> [...] new cooperation strategies which involve not only the Internet [...] but also other related technologies [...] in a process of hybridization, convergence, and interrelated and inexorable developments, leading to the transformation of our media ecology[12].

In this environment, the so-called «digital natives» are modelling their own learning styles and behaviours, bringing to the web: self-expression, personalization, information sharing and reference to peers, moving «in a non-linear way between information and communication sources, to explore the different contexts of knowledge»[13]. They learn how to use digital tools through direct experience and by 'trial and error', when browsing the web. During their experiences they discover the meaning of cultural objects they encounter on the web and produce the adequate tools to explore them.

This new digital culture requires new skills such as the ability to adopt alternative identities open to discovery, the capacity of understanding the meaning of media content and of re-using content, the ability to find the key issues and the relevant details during the exploration of a digital environment as well as the capacity of assessing sources' credibility, finding pertinent information and synthesizing them in a consistent production, and finally the ability to move between different communities and adopt multiple perspectives[14].

[11] Palfrey J., Gasser U., *Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives*, Basic Books, New York 2010.
[12] Ferri P., *La scuola digitale*, Bruno Mondadori, Milano 2008, p. 27-28.
[13] Mantovani S., Ferri P., *Digital Kids*, Fondazione Ibm Italia, Milano 2008, p. 27.
[14] Jenkins et al., *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21 Century*, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Cambridge (MA) 2009.

To really participate in a process of media content sharing, Internet users have to acquire the essential tools for Internet browsing and learn how to use online communication tools (e.g., e-mail, forums, chat, newsgroups, social networks) as well as develop critical understanding of media. This means that an aware Internet user should be able, on one hand, to use media in an effective way, and on the other hand, to interpret it critically through analysis, evaluation, and critical reflection on the experience[15].

The collaborative knowledge building does not come naturally nor is it obvious. To this regards, net-surfers need two important skills, i.e. the ability to seize the resources available in the environment, and solid communication skills. This implies networking by combining real and virtual knowledge and experience, in a blending of information found in concrete contexts and in online environments as well as personal and shared knowledge, sought and received from outside[16].

The communicative competence has a fundamental role in the above mentioned processes, because it involves the capacity of being able to create clear messages. Furthermore this competence also requires an understanding of the intentions of the messages as well as their target audience. This is a crucial issue which cannot be taken for granted.

So, only promoting such competences, the De Kerchhove's «participans homo», a subject who feels a sense of belonging to a community by creating and sharing contents and knowledge, may develop[17].

A new competence is therefore emerging to fully enjoy the potential of the web: the cyber-participatory competence.

This expression refers to the subject's ability to connect his/her personal civic responsability (which depends on social and cultural rules) to the capacity of creative expression, that is the individual's ability to develop a personal product through an original process of cultural creation.

Participation in the network places the individual in a digital community, where he/she takes on roles and responsibilities. This is a proactive participation which includes the personal creation of content and civic engagement. While in the real world, participation is often limited to individuals who possess certain resources, credentials or attributes, in the online world, anyone can participate through platforms enabling them to use the new media. Web 2.0, then, provides the opportunity to move from simple enjoyment to proactive creation of music content, news, and videos[18].

The above considerations about the changing world of the digital media represent the socio-cultural background of «My You Tube» project, which is

[15] Calvani et al., *La competenza digitale nellla scuola*, Erickson, Trento 2010, p. 19.
[16] Ranieri M., *Formazione e cyberspazio. Divari e opportunità nel mondo della rete*, ETS, Pisa 2006, pp. 116-117.
[17] Fasolino L., Moscato G., *Quando la scuola si affaccia sulla rete*, Anicia, Roma 2009, p. 49.
[18] James et al., *Young People, Ethics, and the New Digital Media*, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Cambridge (MA) 2009, pp. 68-69.

the specific focus of this chapter. During the phase of project planning, we found it fundamental to focus the attention not only on the new practices described above, but also on the awareness of media consumption. In our view, young people should be able to make informed and aware choices within a wide range of different media offers.

The well-informed and autonomous use of media requires that students understand the importance to 'filter' data and information, recognizing their intentions and perspectives, in order to make more aware choices and decisions. Well-informed choices are dictated by the needs and motivations of a Internet user who is aware of the various possibilities provided by the media. The «My You Tube» project tried to develop skills of aware consumption and selection. Such skills are today necessary for an aware consumer/producer, able to move safely in the rich and varied environment of the media. Media understanding, which also includes the analysis of the implicit messages and of the communication context, provides students with the opportunity to better define their identities by comparing their choices with those of peers, becoming critical users able to select information, understanding certain messages, and arguing for personal preferences[19].

3. Why You Tube

Among the communication and participation tools available on the net, the You Tube portal allows young people to tell their stories, explore other people's stories and access vast amounts of videos. Through You Tube users can become a 'prosumer' in a way that combines social networking and audio-visual consumption, playing the double roles of a «spectator who creates or modifies existing contents according his/her communication needs, and a commentator who discusses content and shares them with friends»[20].

You Tube, the most famous example of User Generated Content, started as a free service to distribute online video. After producing a video with any device, users can easily and quickly move it online through a simple interface. In web 2.0, whose most successful projects are based on user generated content, You Tube embraces the value of sharing audiovisual content among users[21].

The choice of You Tube as research field of work and learning tool was suggested by the popularity of the portal among young people.

[19] Ceretti F., Felini D., Giannatelli R., *Primi passi nella media education*, Erickson, Trento 2006.
[20] Uggè E., *Oltre la televisione. Dal DVB-H al Web 2.0*, Le Edizioni Universitarie, Milano 2007, p. 17.
[21] Prati G., *op. cit.*, Uniservice, Roma 2007, p. 153.

Almost half of all You Tube users are less than twenty years old[22]. The website not only provides the opportunity to publishing personal videos, but it also increasingly shows more official commercials and advertising, which require a critical analysis. Therefore the pedagogical attention focuses on the potential uses and limits of this media in order to reduce perils and increase benefits.

You Tube involves the development of certain skills, which the environment itself supports, thus allowing the user to be both reader and author. Indeed, this portal enables not only content consumption, but also critical and creative knowledge construction. When speaking of critical and creative knowledge building, we refer to the ability to grasp the implicit and explicit meanings contained in the video and, at the same time, to determine the intentions and the recipients of the products to share online.

The use of You Tube may enable the development of creative skills and expression, the ability to compare identities in a multicultural environment, the capacity of meta-semantic, meta-communicative, and meta-cognitive reflection, as well as the development of complex design skills including learning how to organize, justifying personal choices, and planning and implementing a project with others[23].

Learning to use You Tube functionalities and characteristics as well as its creative possibilities, may enable the school to guide students in the exploration of this digital world where users can observe and be observed. This is a flexible and networked process of consumption for the users. In this dialogue between young people and digital media, the concept of a computer as a simple calculating machine, useful only to elaborate documents or presentations, is surpassed. In You Tube users come in touch with several types of content ranging from business to art, from personal video to video news, from information to poetry. You Tube may allow users to communicate and collaborate through learning by doing, stimulating reflective learning, and facilitating simulation techniques. In a process of elaboration and representation of reality, the idea of making movies in school and spreading them through You Tube may become, as defined by Flusser «a new magic spell, which does not aim at transforming the external world, but our concepts about the world»[24].

Rather than banning technologies, school should start a dialogue with teenagers, working together to find creative solutions, exploring the aesthetic and communicative possibilities of the network and supporting students in the development of critical awareness[25].

[22] Cf. http://www.brainessence.it/2008/01/23/tutti-i-numeri-di-youtube.
[23] Calvani A., Rotta M., *Comunicazione e apprendimento in Internet. Didattica costruttivista in rete*, Erickson, Trento 1999, p. 97.
[24] Flusser V., *Towards a philosophy of photography*, Reaktion Books, London 2000.
[25] Palfrey J., Gasser U., *op. cit.*, 2010.

When creating media, we discover that our identities are essentially communicative in nature[26]: we create messages through the use of a variety of codes, both visual and auditory, and thanks to these multiple codes we can deconstruct and reconstruct our knowledge. The computer becomes a 'plural tool' supporting communication and knowledge sharing[27]. However, technology is not enough to enhance knowledge building processes. Creativity is needed, because only through creative processes people can develop original solutions to their problems, generating satisfaction and well-being, refining observation and concentration, avoiding monotony and stereotype[28].

4. You Tube potentials for self-expression

Through the selection of video from You Tube, students celebrate a story connected to other You Tube users' stories and lives. Indeed, movies often offer different representations of reality providing students the opportunity to compare their points of view with alternative perspectives and values.

As pointed out by Bruner, in videos created by young people and uploaded to You Tube, stories are entwined with the life of culture, so becoming an integral part of the culture itself. Stories are about the subjects' «essential self», who need to express themselves[29].

Stories on the web become colourful through the use of pictures and images, that act as an appropriate tool to communicate emotions, facilitate memory, and represent reality. Even sound plays an important role in You Tube. The possibility to share music and video content is the real strength of this platform, because users can access and spread easily many and different types of media contents. Young people are no longer only product consumers, as they can now interact with each other and manipulate objects. They can also create their own profile, through their choices, comments and friendships.

Therefore people can 'shape' technologies, bending them to their needs, in a hypertextual space open to multiple crossings, and making use of symbols and entities which can be determined and modified from time to time by the users themselves and exploiting the potential of «users-generated content» web sites[30].

As stated by Bruner, the construction of identity is closely related to the capacity for storytelling. This capacity allows us to connect with

[26] Pecchinenda G., *Videogiochi e cultura della simulazione*, Laterza, Bari 2010, p. 5.
[27] Cangià C., *Teoria e pratica della comunicazione multimediale*, Tuttoscuola, Roma, 2001, p. 106.
[28] Cangià C., *ibidem*, p. 164.
[29] Bruner J., *Making stories: law, literature, life*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA) 2003.
[30] Mancini I., Ligorio B.M., *Progettare scuola con i blog. Riflessioni ed esperienze per una didattica innovativa nella scuola dell'obbligo*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2007, p. 10.

other people, to selectively go back to our past, while preparing for the possibilities of an imagined future[31].

An Experience in a Junior Secondary School: You Tube to tell themselves

«My You Tube» project originated by the need to promote students' capacity of aware media use and consumption. As already said, You Tube is widely used by young people because it catalyzes several elements such as television viewing and radio listening, it provides the opportunity to retrieve in a short time music, events, advertising or non-professional video, that are objects of everyday communication among young people. You Tube is therefore an ideal instrument gaining the interest of pupils and shifting the attention from a simple and intuitive use of the tool to a more mature, careful and conscious form of media consumption.

The experience took place in a second grade class of a junior secondary school in Bressanone (Bozen, Italy). Sixteen students were involved for a period of three months for a total of twenty hours with two teachers teaching respectively literacy and ICTs[32].

To keep pupils' interests alive with regards to the specific learning objectives of the module, the activity was supported by the creation and the implementation of a website. The website was conceived as a point of reference, where pupils could find information and hints concerning the project's activities (see below fig. 1). Moreover, through the internal forum, the website also aimed at encouraging communication and reflection on students' activities. The website «My You Tube», divided into subsections for each topic addressed, represented a guide for the proposed activities, a container for students' productions, a diary of the experience with interesting feedback from users[33].

The aim of the project was to make students discover You Tube features to guide them in the exploration of the tool. Another important objective was the development of students' awareness of their interests and motivations as online searching, as indicators of their satisfaction or happiness levels. The final purpose was that students, through pointing out their favourite video, creating playlists, and commenting on videos, could say something about themselves, and be more conscious about their identity, characterized by clear choices, determined by needs and interests, and supplied with individual peculiarities and originality.

The teaching method was based on a constructivistic approach. Through guided discovery and direct experience with media content students could

[31] Bruner J., *op. cit.*, 2003.

[32] The activity was carried out by Beate Weyland and Paolo Carboni of the University of Bozen with Pietro Miani and Paola Buoso of Junior Secondary School of Bressanone. Carboni has also created the website of the project.

[33] The web site address is: http://www.ilmioyoutube.jimdo.com.

reflect on their You Tube personal use, developing their own knowledge. Indeed, observing their relationships with the media, students created their cognitive map to understand and elaborate their personal interpretations, also through the collaboration with peers. The role of teachers was to provide students with appropriate tools and rules to better understand media messages.

First Phase - Knowledge and Exploration

Before starting the course students' knowledge of You Tube structure and content was tested. Then, pupils were left to freely explore the platform and search for video. Some students did not know the platform very well, therefore they had difficulty navigating the website. During this early activity, students mainly access video available on the Home Page, or that were the most popular or that were advised by You Tube. Only a few pupils were able to search categories or subcategories in the platform. Anyway, this first phase was helpful because the pupils discovered that, although they considered You Tube special and interesting, they often did not know how to use it and for what purpose.

Still in the first phase, the You Tube history was explained and some specific characteristics were analyzed. The explanation moments were interspersed with practical exercises, where the students were looking for the video mentioned in You Tube history. The aim was therefore to make students familiar with video's hierarchy and search functionalities, and also make them conscious of the commercial interests behind You Tube. The activity continued with the search of video related to personal preferences and here the students also encountered interactive video, where users may decide the direction of the movie. During the search of video students were fascinated by the most creative and entertaining movies, awarded by people on the web. The presentations of «You Tube Orchestra» or «Dances for the world of Matt» highlighted the global nature of You Tube phenomenon and the possibilities for multicultural communication and interaction on the web.

Second Phase: Appropriation

Once students reached a clear idea of You Tube structure and functionalities, teachers explained and showed how to create a playlist. Starting with a topic selected from the You Tube list, the pupils working in groups, created their own lists containing their favourite video on the topic. The students' playlists were then published and shared on the «My You Tube» website[34]. The mutual observation of the playlists created by

[34] Cf. http://ilmioyoutube.jimdo.com/favourites.

each group led students to suggest possible integrations or post comments on the video collected.

The school trip to the Island of Giglio (Tuscany, Italy) in conjunction with the conclusion of activities provided an opportunity to collect films and photographs, that were then selected and assembled in a five-minute movie uploaded to You Tube. Then, through a specific function of the platform, students were able to add comments through comics or a colourful call out[35].

Phase Three: Evaluation and Socialization

The last phase of the project was devoted to the analysis of preferences and motivations for using You Tube as well as to explain and compare emotions related to media consumption. This was a type of exercise to control and socialize lessons learned and was organized in two parts: «You Tube in words» (What words do you associate with this term?) and «You Tube in gestures» (What are your emotions and feelings on You Tube?).

With regard to the first part, «You Tube in words - The verbalizations», pupils wrote on three separate papers a word characterizing You Tube, then a subject and finally a verb. The use of the paper was due to the need that all the students had to be involved in the activity, even very shy pupils, so that they could explain their opinions and beliefs almost anonymously. Everything was written on the blackboard (see fig. 1) and, in pairs, the students tried to relate words and construct sentences that could make sense for them.

Figure n.1 – A screenshot of the «My You Tube» website with a picture of the blackboard used during the activity «You Tube in words - The verbalizations»

[35] Cf. http://ilmioyoutube.jimdo.com/pubblichiamo.

A list of the sentences is given below:

- People are curious and explore You Tube because it is interesting: You Tube is a place to discover
- Watching video on You Tube is fun, and to upload video to You Tube you must be able to communicate
- Surfing You Tube makes the world yours!
- You Tube is fun, it makes people surfing and thinking about the universe. Enjoy the web
- You Tube: analyzing the multiple dimensions of You Tube looks like looking into a kaleidoscope
- You Tube is beautiful because you can also listen to music
- Watching personal videos on You Tube is interesting and fun
- Through You Tube you may meet with other people and the world becomes more curious
- Communicating with a full screen is beautiful
- People found out that You Tube is useful
- Kids prefer watching You Tube rather than studying
- On You Tube we can surf in the first class without paying the ticket, viewing words from the screen
- All the world can watch and listen to You Tube
- (Teacher's composition) People in the world, through the computer on a particular website, watch video to discover an endless and beautiful universe which looks like a kaleidoscope. The full screen allows people to surf and communicate in a curious and interesting way. Videos uploaded by people, allow them to explore in a fun and exciting way multiple worlds, and stop thinking for a while
- (Teacher's composition) It is difficult to find exactly the video we are looking for. Where are the subtitles? They are in a foreign language, we don't understand!
- Loading is slow, it takes long time.
- And what programs can we watch? There are no Italian programs.
- I don't want bullies inside, I would like a better organization
- I would like to communicate in a faster way
- Some features are not clear, I cannot understand!
- I would prefer it was nice like a kaleidoscope!

Upon analyzing the words and the sentences that students formulated, we noticed a very positive appreciation for You Tube – with the exception of the teacher. The adjectives used by the students provided more than a simple description of the tool (multi facet, communicative, universal, useful) by deeply describing how the media was perceived by them (curious, interesting, fun, diverse, nice, beautiful). Looking at the verbs used by the pupils, we noted that the students described You Tube through the verbs that are usually used to describe the social and interactive functionalities of web 2.0. Indeed, besides the verbs typically used to depict You Tube (e.g., watch, explore, listen to, discover, communicate), pupils indicated also verbs such as talking with and making friends. This suggested that pupils

perceived You Tube also as a tool to interact and socialize with peers like other social software.

Moreover, we observed that the words they associated with You Tube referred to instruments (computer, website, volume, video, full screen, video clip), or to contents (people, world, universe, persons) or to particular interests (tennis, soccer, sport). During the socialization phase, the attention was captured by the idea of the kaleidoscope (a word selected by one of the teachers). Initially many students were not familiar with this peculiar object, but when they learned the word they found it very appropriate to describe You Tube.

To verify not only students' positive attitudes, but also their capacity of critical understanding and their uncertainties towards You Tube, students were asked to write at least one You Tube critical review. The list below contains some of the sentences they wrote:

- Some videos on You Tube are not fun because of bad quality
- There is no control on You Tube, to be on You Tube you only need the skills to upload content
- Sometimes there are negative comments on You Tube
- Sometimes downloading a video is slow and maybe the video quality is bad or poor
- Some videos are fun only because they represent violent actions
- You Tube is bad when videos stop, or when the videos take long to load
- You cannot watch movies on You Tube, even if it would be cool
- Sometimes people do not respect copyright laws on You Tube. Despite that, it is cool and it would be great to have also a chat
- There should be more control on You Tube and violent movies should be deleted

Examining students' comments, many issues emerged. First of all, students indicated technical barriers and obstacles: the most common was slow loading of some videos.

Other issues that students noticed revealed a keen capacity of critical analysis and referred to video quality and to the fact that videos were sometimes violent or stupid, hurting viewer sensibility. It was also noticed that there was not an available a chat room to communicate while using You Tube.

The second part of the exercise was «You Tube gestures – Emotions and feelings on You Tube». During the activity, the students took turns and tried to express their emotions on You Tube using only body language, while peers tried to guess the right message.

The emotions they portrayed were the following: agitation, terror, amazement, boredom, distrust, disappointment, despair, helplessness, anger, cheer, satisfaction, tenderness, and happiness.

On the emotional side, a more negative perception on You Tube emerged, in contrast to the results of the verbalizations' activity.

This element suggested that pupils picked out and reported the common enthusiasm for new technologies, especially the Internet. Indeed, they were not familiar with these tools and above all, they did not have a clear idea on how make their choices.

Without teachers' guide, students were sometimes disoriented and were exposed to diverse, and even inadequate, contents. Internet was perceived as an huge mine of information available in symbolic code and images. You Tube was described as «another Internet», consisting of many moving images and music. Internet and You Tube were perceived as parallel universes where young people with no guide, low awareness, and no browsing tricks, could often lose the way and be disappointed by the promises of these powerful media.

5. Evidence and Feedback

The activity was conducted by two researchers in collaboration with two teachers who planned the project's phases, managed reinforcement' moments and provided suggestions and feedback to improve the project[36]. Students participated frequently in the «My You Tube» web forum (even at home)[37] and this suggested that the experience was in some extent satisfactory. Pupils also expressed their opinions and reflections on class dynamics and the quality of their interactions. The decision to implement a dedicated website to share information, communicate between students and review works, had also the double purpose of enabling pupils to monitor their activities at home and showing parents the work done at school. The final aim was also to offer students a tool to support their informed consumption of You Tube at home, thus making the web site a bridge between the school and the family.

The web site was enhanced not only by students' contributions through mutual comments, but also by the teachers, who had the opportunity to interact with their students in a new way and get to know them a little more. The possibility to track the process analytically was appreciated by the school headmaster, who received a 'digital logbook' of the experience.

In the final phase of the activity the students were asked to answer a questionnaire including the same questions asked before starting the project. In the first questionnaire students' answers were uncertain and randomly given, while from the final questionnaire's answers a fuller picture of the students emerged. Students started to recognize some

[36] Detailed information on the tools used in the study (e.g., questionnaires, evaluation grid and so on) and further documentation on the process, including students productions and teachers' observations, are available on the On Air web site: http://www.onair.medmediaeducation.it, and on the «My You Tube» web site: http://www.ilmioyoutube.jimdo.com.

[37] Cf. http://www.ilmioyoutube.jimdo.com/commenti.

features of You Tube, they understood that keywords were useful to find videos on the platform, and were able to define the general structures of the site (from the concept of channels to the notion of genres).

With reference to the capacity of searching for new videos on You Tube, an interesting finding emerged. By analyzing the data related to the last videos accessed by the students, it was found that when looking for new movies students did not limit to search for movies heard from friends or TV. On the contrary, they made original searches by themselves.

Furthermore, the final questionnaire's answers were more accurate in the description of the experience that took place in class. Pupils reflected on the nature of the tool and developed a more complex notion of You Tube. This was probably due to the socialization activity. In fact, some of the terms used to describe You Tube, e. g. «multi facet» and «universal», were also used during the activity session carried out with the whole class. The use of the word «creative» to connote You Tube could indicate that at least someone captured the suggestion given during the class that media can be manipulated, especially the already uploaded videos, by simply adding comments through comics and everything else. Even from the question about You Tube's usefulness more aware answers emerged: from generic answers such as «Getting in touch with the world» students moved to more functional definitions (to communicate, to study, to learn) showing a more aware view of the instrument.

Students demonstrated an improvement of their capacity of searching on You Tube and a better understanding of the fact that many videos are uploaded by common people. They also started to realize that advertising plays an important role in the delivery of the videos. Students learned to distinguish between private and public spheres, personal and commercial videos, which was of fundamental relevance for project's purposes. Our purpose was that by the end of the experience, students were aware that the platform was a participatory space and, at the same time, we wanted to warn them about the pitfalls of digital advertising. An aspect that characterized the whole experience was the reflection on navigation's strategies and on the reasons for videos' selection. Students revealed an increased level of awareness: in fact no students answered to ignore the criteria that determined their choices and all of them clearly stated their motives You Tube searches.

The questionnaire also asked to represent You Tube through a drawing. Many students, especially in the final test, drew a globe with slogans such as «discover me», «a world to discover». Some pupils produced more concrete representations of You Tube, drawing the computer screen and so on.

In one drawing a computer screen with the sentence «20% of advertising» was reported. A student represented - in both the first and second questionnaire – himself alone in a bubble, and wrote «To me is another

world where I enjoy myself, I lock myself in my virtual world». Another student in both the first and second questionnaire drew a stand offering free music and videos.

In these drawings You Tube was represented as a world to discover where, as a pupil wrote, everything could happen: «The night, the day, the world, nothing, fun, boring, all, little, travel, science and much more».

Young people today are the main drivers for imagining a future based on a participatory society. Only promoting reflective thinking and stimulating identity building processes can we contribute to the development of safe and responsible individuals, capable of accomplishing their potential while respecting other people. This entails promoting individuals' awareness that even online, and in the case of You Tube, their freedom ends where that of others begins.

A. Rosa

Chapter 8
Open Digital Resources for Media Education. The Web Portal of the On Air Project

1. Introduction

One of the main aims of the On Air project was to sustain teachers and educators in the effective development of Media Education (ME) in school. To achieve this general purpose a web portal[1] was designed and implemented to support teachers' community building and provide them with educational resources and tools in the perspective of lifelong learning.

The current research on networked learning and the educational potential of web 2.0 shows that ICTs, properly used, can support teachers training and improve their professional development. For example, communities of practice, which are typically engaged in the exchange of tacit - and therefore not coded - knowledge, can integrate well-organized databases of encoded experiences (the «know that» and «know how») with fast communication and interactive queries (the «know who» and «know where»). Or, learning communities can use synchronous and asynchronous tools to communicate and interact, alternating face-to-face meetings and virtual conferences, or turning into virtual communities of learning[2].

Today, a growing number of teachers turns to the net in search of web sources and colleagues in order to share information and discuss subjects

[1] Cf. http://www.onair.medmediaeducation.it/default.aspx.

[2] These topics have been analyzed by Calvani A., *Rete comunità e conoscenza*, Erickson, Trento 2005. See also Ranieri M., *Reti di scuole, scuole in rete. Un'opportunità per la scuola del XXI secolo*, in R. Biagioli, T. Zappaterra (Eds.), *La scuola primaria. Soggetti, contesti, metodologie e didattiche*, ETS, Pisa 2010, pp. 279-295; and Fini A., Cigognini E. (Eds.), *Web 2.0 e social networking. Nuovi paradigmi per la formazione*, Erickson, Trento 2009.

Alberto Parola, Maria Ranieri, *Media Education in Action: a Research Study in Six European Countries*,
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of common interest. This phenomenon indicates the growing interest of school professionals in managing their own learning and developing new competences for the organization of effective learning situations[3].

The On Air web portal tries to address the information and training needs emerging from school, offering teachers a wide range of ME learning resources for classroom or self-training use. All the products available on the portal are published under the license «Creative Commons Attribution, Non Commercial, Share-alike»: anyone is free to use, modify and distribute them, except for commercial purposes, provided the «Project On Air» is mentioned as the original author and it maintains the same license over derivatives. Thus, the On Air portal can be seen as an example of «Open Educational Resources» (OER). This formula, first used in 2002 during the UNESCO *Forum on the Impact of Open Courseware for Higher Education in Developing Countries*[4], refers to all the materials and educational resources on the web, offered free of charge and open to everyone, giving users the opportunity to enjoy, improve and redistribute the resources themselves[5]: «The provision of open educational resources, enabled by information and communication technologies, for consultation, use and adaptation by a community of users for non-commercial purposes»[6].

In this definition, there are three main features characterizing the notion of OER, i. e. (1) the «openness», (2) the role of technology and (3) the emphasis on non-commercial purposes. This early definition, through some important steps involving the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)[7], has evolved into the Cape Town Open Education Declaration, launched by the Open Society Institute and signed by over 2000 people and more than 200 organizations. The Cape Town declaration states that:

> [...] open education is not limited to just open educational resources. It also draws upon open technologies that facilitated collaborative, flexible learning and the open sharing of teaching practices that empower educators to benefit from the best ideas of their colleagues. It may also grow to include new approaches to assessment, accreditation and collaborative learning[8].

[3] Perrenoud P., *Dieci nuove competenze per insegnare*, Anicia, Roma 2003.
[4] Cf. http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=5303&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.
[5] We cannot focus here on the debate related to the OERs' opportunities. For a more detailed analysis see Blackall L., *Pratiche e risorse educative aperte*, «Journal of e-Learning and Knowledge Society», 3, 2, Giugno 2007, pp. 65-85.
[6] UNESCO, *Forum on the Impact of Open Courseware for Higher Education in Developing Countries. Final Report*, UNESCO, Paris 2002, p. 24. Available online at the following URL: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001285/128515e.pdf.
[7] OECD, *Giving Knowledge for Free: The Emergence of Open Educational Resources*, OECD, Paris 2007.
[8] Cf. http://www.capetowndeclaration.org/read-the-declaration.

The issue of OER also has relevant ethical implications, of great interest to ME. The OER movement is promoting an ideal of democratic access to knowledge through the Internet that should attract media educators' attention. In this context, the On Air website has been developed to provide teachers from different countries with the opportunity to access and exchange learning materials and contents, and to disseminate teaching practices and self study tools for educators.

Having introduced the overall background for the implementation of the web portal, we shall analyze the peculiarities that make it an important resource to promote ME in school.

2. Home page and On Air project presentation

We begin the analysis of the On Air platform starting from the home page that, as for any site, can be considered a business card as well as an orientation tool of the entire structure.

Figure 1. Home page of the On Air portal

According to studies by Lindgaard[9], the human brain is able to make a first instinctive assessment of a web site by looking at it for less than 1/20 of a second, the time of a 'blink of an eye'. In this very short period of time all

[9] See BBC News: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/4616700.stm, published on 16/01/2006. The study of Giette Lindgaard and colleagues from the Carleton University in Ottawa (Canada) appeared on the journal «Behaviour & Information Technology»: Lindgaard G., Fernandes G., Dudek C., Brown J., *Attention web designers: You have 50 milliseconds to make a good first impression!*, «Behaviour & Information Technology», 25, 2006, pp. 115-126.

the impressions that will affect the subsequent navigation and the overall evaluation of the product, are recorded.

The home page of the On Air website has been designed in a simple and straightforward way, aimed at a wide audience including even non-expert users. In order to allow each visitor to reach the information sought as smoothly and quickly as possible an easy to read structure has been made, with a menu on the left side of the home page providing a clear navigation.

At the bottom, an e-mail address and a link to the MED website have been added, thus allowing visitors to interact immediately with the representatives of the project.

A similar approach characterized also the selection of colours with a predominance of black text on white background, and limited use of colours.

In the home page eight videos related to «Media Based Educational Material» are available. We will focus later in detail on these videos. Here we would like only to point out that the decision to propose the video on the home page aimed at gaining user's attention by immediately presenting him the opportunity to find in the site a variety of training tools.

Indeed, each element of the platform cannot be considered as a simple technical solution, both as regards the specific features of the media languages used (e.g., video) and the possible integration of these media languages in the learning process. Therefore every choice is based on a clear educational purpose, considering both the needs of the target and the real features of the training contexts[10].

Great attention was paid also to the choice of texts associated with hyperlinks, which contain information addressed to visitors. Although it may seem fairly obvious, there are several web sites characterized by lengthy introductions which may discourage browsing.

The project structure, for example, is explained in the page «Project», characterized by short texts through five easy labels: background, objectives, target groups, activities and results. The presentation of the project is then detailed in the section «Meeting», where the four transnational partners' meetings, from 2008 to 2010, are briefly described.

The meetings provided an opportunity for partners to interact and negotiate views and purposes. Of particular interest in this section is the photo report, presented in an 'eye-catching' graphics that allows the viewer to feel part, albeit virtually, of the working process that have led to the development of the project.

Through the use of such devices, the platform tries to reduce the gap between teachers and researchers: in fact, teachers are regarded here as

[10] Carminati V., *Metadati, ontologie e paradigmi dell'apprendimento*, in P. Ardizzone, C. Scurati (Eds.), *Information computer technology. Cultura Formazione Apprendimento*, Unicoply, Milano 2009, pp.57-87.

fundamental actors of the research process and not passive recipients of the training sections. Pictures do not simply have an aesthetic function, but also an educational value which is here emphasized. Visitors can turn the digital photos published in this section like a family photo album. A family album is defined by Farné as:

> [...] a textbook based on images, through which you engage in both learning about your family history and, at the implicit level, developing a sort of 'visual literacy' on the basis of affective communication starting from the iconic language of these images. The didactic nature of the album is given by its synoptic structure and the order of the photographs[11].

In our case, the decision to publish on the web portal the pictures representing researchers at work as well as the photos capturing moments of socialization - where researchers were engaged in spontaneous interactions -, constitutes a symbolic synthesis of the meetings realized during the project with the people who took part in the events.

Thus users can visit the portal and feel a sense of belonging to the working process virtually shared in this digital space.

After «Meetings», there is a section dedicated to the presentation of the events that each partner organized to promote On Air results. This section has been structured through a database where 385 initiatives have been catalogued in chronological order, and information about the event date, type, title and organizer are provided.

Users can query the database by inserting the name of a partner and obtain information about the partner activity. Thus, for example, the Italian partners have promoted and coordinated 75 training and awareness activities (31 activities were organized respectively by the University La Sapienza and 44 steps on the part of MED). Then, clicking on «Summer School on Media Education», the user can access a description that highlights the characteristics of the event, feedback and results as well as a specification about the documentation related to the event. This section provides a significant picture of the great effort made by the partners to raise awareness around ME and reach a large number of subjects not only through the network but also on the territory.

Browsing through the database each user can identify the local organizations of interest to him/her and participate in their activities, or can use the material provided by the organization. Such a database can also be considered as a useful tool to rationalize the resources, because it allows bodies interested in organizing events on similar issues to promote networks between stakeholders (schools, libraries, museums, NGOs, associations) working within the same territory.

[11] Farné R., *Diletto e giovamento. Le immagini e l'educazione*, UTET, Torino 2006, p. 146.

Finally, clicking on «Working area» the user can access the research tools used in the project and evaluate the possibility to transfer them to other experiences in other contexts. We make reference to previous chapters for the analysis of project tools and results[12]: here we would like to highlight the emphasis on transparency and sharing that characterized the entire project both as regards project planning and research tools.

The same idea of participation and sharing inspired the link to educational institutions where, again within a database, the schools that have actively participated in the research project are listed. Also in this case an easy search tool was created which requires the entry of the name of the school or the nation as search criteria.

The information available in this database may be useful to build networks of schools. Such networks can be based on the collaboration between teachers and schools, both as regards the planning of common projects and the development of related activities, also in the perspective of participating in tenders and competitions.

Briefly, the sections considered so far provide information about the project structure and participants, thus allowing the visitors to understand the context in which the training materials, presented below, have been designed and implemented.

3. Reports and Publications: Research Study Tools

Under «Reports» and «Publications» the relations between the potential and the peculiarities of the media as well as the issues related to education with and about to the media, are analyzed in the context of school. To this end, four reports were written on the following issues[13]:

1. *Teachers and Students Needs Analysis*: includes the research results related to the analysis of students and teachers' media competences and uses compared to different types of media (both traditional and digital).

2. *Use of Media in Education*: describes the different ways of structuring projects in ME in primary and secondary schools in the European countries involved in the project. It contains a quantitative analysis of research data, which is important to understand the distribution of digital media in schools and their integration into daily teaching.

3. *Focus Group*: summarizes the main results emerged from the focus groups about the use of media in schools. In this phase qualitative methods were used as adequate research tools enabling the identification of adults

[12] See Ch. 3 and 4.

[13] Although all the partners contributed in the elaboration of the documents of this section, the Faculty of Communication Sciences of the University La Sapienza (Rome, Italy) edited the final report on the sociological aspects, while MED produced all the tools related to assessment and evaluation in ME.

and children's media uses within and outside school, and the investigation of meanings, values and criteria guiding their choices.

4. *Transnational Report on the «Use of Media Education»*: is a summary of the materials presented above and represents the final stage of the first phase of the research.

5. *Guidelines for the assessment and evaluation of media educational paths*: proposes models and tools to evaluate teaching and learning activities in the field of ME. Generally speaking, there is a lack of docimologic research in ME studies. This report thus may represent an useful resource for teachers of secondary school by offering an evaluation methodology which can be used to assess the effectiveness of learning materials and to structure a more critical approach to the planning of ME activities.

Each section summarized above is characterized by an introductory part which explains the objectives of the research phase under examination. Defining the objectives of a research is not a simple or trivial activity. Indeed, the effort of sharing the same objectives can be seen as an educational moment in training teachers/researchers capable of field research work, because in the process they can identify the needs and develop working and evaluation methods and tools. Even the choice to use both quantitative and qualitative methodologies can have an educational value, because it demonstrates how the collection of data within a monitoring activity as complex as that proposed in the On Air project, can find in this methodological framework an important ally, that enriches and expands the research work.

In the five aforementioned sections several research study materials are available in different formats. All of them can be downloaded with the exception of the related videos. In particular, the sections «Teachers and Students Needs Analysis» and «Focus Group» contain the national reports and the slides that were prepared to present them. The «European Research on Media Education» report is released both in English and in the partners' languages. Also the reports «Use of Media in Education» and «Guidelines for the assessment and evaluation of media educational paths» are available for download in English and in partners' languages.

It is interesting to note that the main documents have been published in a multilingual version. This facilitates the reading of the reports, encouraging the users who might feel intimidated by the need to translate this conspicuous amount of documents.

The video section includes 5-8 minutes video-reports, which can be considered as tools for further study and which confer to the platform dynamic and more engaging elements. Although not produced according to the video production techniques recommended by the e-learning standards, videos published in the On Air platform are interesting examples of Video Learning Objects which can also be reused in the future in different educational contexts.

In short we can say that the material available in the section «Report» constitutes a vast area of documentation consisting of more than 1000 pages, whose study can be further deepened through the bibliographical suggestions contained in «Publications».

The «Publications» section consists of a database including 128 documents in the field of ME studies and policy. The documents are classified according to the following categories: empirical research, theoretical research, legislative document, newspaper/magazine article and essays. Documents can be found using these categories or inserting the name of the partner which created the related record. Each document is described in an analytical way with information about title, number of pages, author and publisher, language, web address of publisher, compiler and partner. Of course, there is also a summary of content, so users can evaluate the relevance and pertinence of the document. Unlike previous areas, the «Publications» section is more interactive: within each of the records, users can give a feedback and add some comments on the documents. Thus the portal must no longer be seen as «a technological solution to access a set of structured information» but as a real web 2.0 participatory technology. In the On Air project the teacher is not required to passively receive the web material, but is invited to participate actively in the construction of knowledge that becomes a common heritage. Interactivity here entails active participation where individuals «are no longer limited to exchange views, but share knowledge, products of creativity and personal expertise»[14].

Figure 2. A screenshot of a record in the «Publications» section

[14] Bruschi B., *Il valore aggiunto dell'interattività: web, DTT e videogiochi*, in A. Parola (Ed.), *Territori mediaeducativi. Scenari, sperimentazioni e progetti nella scuola e nell'extrascuola*, Erickson, Trento 2008, p. 399.

The value of this section is essential for the purposes of the web portal since interactivity is a key element in knowledge production. The literature has long emphasized that the processes of knowledge are social in nature and that, as shown by constructivism and symbolic interactionism, social interactions play an important role in the production of meanings. Knowledge is a result of collaboration and social negotiation, and not an individual production. The interaction thus becomes an important factor in knowledge production, even within online learning. In this regard, Barrett[15] points out that interactivity represents not only the added value offered by the technological systems, but their very essence.

In the case of this section, users may not only exchange views and opinions about publications and their results, but also explain their personal way to translate them into practice. This emphasis on collaborative knowledge building represents a key aspect of the «Case studies» section.

4. «Case studies» section

The area devoted to «Case Studies» contains a rich collection of ME experiences focused on the development of media skills and competences. Even in this case data has been organized in a database, which now includes 309 records. Experiences can be found by inserting the name of the partner, but further implementations will be necessary in the future to improve the search process.

MED has collected the highest number of experiences (60) thanks to the network of teachers trained in its almost twenty years' activity and the network of schools involved in ME which regard the association as their point of reference.

For each experience in the data base two levels of information are provided. On a first level, the experience is briefly presented through an abstract and some general information such as title, teaching methods, learning purposes, media used, educational issues addressed, and curricular disciplines involved. On a more detailed level, the experience is described through a form which contains all the necessary information to replicate the learning activity in other contexts and which can be downloaded. This section is therefore a fundamental resource to move from ME theory to ME practice.

[15] Barret E., *Sociomedia: multimedia, hypermedia, and social construction of knowledge*, The MIT Press, Cambridge 1992. Although this book dates back to Nineties, it still provides strong insights into the changing world of media and social knowledge construction processes.

Figure 3. A screenshot of a record in the «Case studies» section

As already noticed, the forms take the reader in a detailed 'step by step' for the implementation of the activity providing accurate information, leading him in a more careful analysis. The items included in the form (see also Ch. 3) reveal the attention paid to the problems that typically emerge when working with teachers in the field, because it anticipates many of the objections that teachers typically make, when they face a ME activity during their training. One of the main objections makes reference to equipment costs and lack of budget. In this regard, it is interesting to note that almost all the experiences documented in the platform have no external funding to the usual teaching. On the contrary it shows a population of teachers used to funded research projects or to the design of activities at no cost. The proposals in this section cannot be perceived as being dropped from above, because in most cases teachers are talking to other teachers and colleagues who report their teaching experiences and provide suggestions on ME practice. The teacher's narration is not a one-way communication, as other teachers can add their «comments» on the reported experience. Here too, the platform supports collaborative processes of knowledge construction through the sharing of experiences and resources among practitioners in a transnational perspective. As Parola emphasizes:

> [...] the network language may increase individuals' communicative competence because by opening up to new contexts and new linguistic forms, it enhances and promotes the four types mentioned by Fontana[16]: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse type, and finally the strategic type[17].

The platform tries to satisfy the increasing need to create ICT-enhanced learning environments to enable people to cooperate and interact with each other in a new common and effective communicative space.

5. From theory to practice: «Training» section

The On Air platform gradually leads the reader towards practice. The «Training» section is without doubt the web site place where this intention turns into realty as it invites the users to put into practice what they have learned, through the tools and methods so far examined. Here, the web portal offers eight educational modules. Each module has been designed and tested by project partners with the aim to develop media skills and competences related to reading, writing, critical thinking, and aware use (see Ch. 1 and 2).

The modules have been conceived as flexible materials, which can be reused without substantial changes by less experienced teachers, or adapted on different issues, while preserving the same purposes. Under the subsection «Educational Packages» the following six modules are available: Design principles for Media Education (Module 1); Evaluating media skills and competences (Module 2); Reading skills and competences (Module 3); Writing skills and competences (Module 4); Critical thinking skills and competences (Module 5); User skills and competences (Module 6).

The overall purpose of these modules is that of promoting aware and informed citizens, able to read and understand media messages and use their resources to participate in the public and global space of our contemporary societies.

[16] Fontana D., *Manuale di psicologia per gli insegnanti*, Erickson, Trento 1996.
[17] Parola A., *Sperimentare la formazione in Rete: educare alle relazioni mediate dai nuovi strumenti telematici*, in R. Grimaldi (Ed.), *Le risorse culturali della Rete*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2003, p. 47.

Figure 4. A screenshot of the «Training» section

Each module is characterized by: (a) a theoretical introduction, called «Key Concepts», which explains the boundaries and the meanings of the goals of the module; (b) a section called «Working tools» where a set of instruments useful to achieve the aims of the module is available; (c) a final unit which includes a selection of links for further information on the topic.

Through these modules even non-expert teachers should be able to carry out ME activities in their own educational contexts since each aspect of design, implementation and evaluation is supported by a variety of training tools.

All the modules provide a large number of materials that can be downloaded and used by teachers, and also related explanatory videos. The videos may play an important role as integrative learning resources, because they may have a positive influence on motivation, which is fundamental not only for the acquisition of knowledge and skills, but also for their effective use in professional activities. A large body of literature supports this view, showing that people motivated to learn are able to develop new knowledge and skills and then transfer them into their working contexts better than people with low motivation. The educational modules as well as all the materials developed within the On Air project have been tested in each country involved and the research results have been summarized in the national reports. These reports are now available in the section «Testing seminar».

The «Training» section, with the proposal of the aforementioned modules, is undoubtedly the core of the On Air platform, by connecting

the research already done and future development of the work in a sort of handover between researchers and teachers.

6. Conclusions

The «management of complexity arises as a fundamental element of the teaching profession»[18] in the knowledge society. The professional profile of teaching requires not only rapidly updated technical and scientific skills, but also pedagogical competences subjected to empirical evaluation and capable of critically identifying the social transformations of educational processes[19]. The media play an important role in these social transformations and the On Air web portal aims at providing training material to support the identification of effective responses in the field of ME. Through a new culture of participation that involves many and different skills and competences, researchers and teachers have collaborated to design and develop the products here presented. The On Air platform can be seen as a social network for learning, because it is characterized by the use of active research strategies and the promotion of interactions that stimulate: autonomy in finding appropriate information, cognitive flexibility and forms of learning centred on knowledge sharing and collaboration[20]. The platform may, in conclusion, be included among the tools that allow teachers to participate actively in a cycle of experiences of cultural development which involves participation in projects as well as teaching activities, but above all the ability to reorganize and improve professional experiences through a reflective approach based on teachers' use of personal cognitive and emotional resources[21].

The choice then to publish all the contents under the Creative Commons license, and therefore in an open and free format, should reinforce and support the functions of the portal, in order to sustain self-training practices and democratize access to knowledge and research resources.

[18] Gallina M. A., *Tecnologia dell'informazione e della comunicazione: verso nuovi modelli di insegnamento/apprendimento*, in R. Grimaldi (Ed.), *Diseguaglianze digitali nella scuola. Gli usi didattici delle tecnologie dell'informazione e della comunicazione in Piemonte*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2006, p. 49.

[19] Calvani A., *I nuovi media nella scuola. Quando, perché, come avvalersene*, Carocci, Roma 1999.

[20] Laganà E., *Fad/E-learning e la diversificazione dell'offerta formativa nella Formazione professionale*, «Orientamenti Pedagogici», 53, 1, Gennaio-Febbraio 2006, pp.157-165.

[21] Quaglino G. P., *Fare formazione*, il Mulino, Bologna 1985.

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Some Conclusive Remarks about Issues and Opportunities for Media Education

To conclude we will highlight, though not systematically, some of the issues and opportunities that ME raises in particular through its theories and activities.

We will start our analysis by focusing on the issues. First we consider a subject which constantly appears in discussions on educational innovation: that of resources. If by resources it is meant funding, the solutions are not at hand, as funding depends largely on government policies, and in recent decades has been progressively decreasing. In this context, it becomes strategic from an educational point of view, to rely on networks of schools, and also participate in community of practices and sharing of educational resources. However, we would like add clarity to the misunderstandings related to the issue of resources. Today, most schools can carry out ME practices and experiences through very 'small' resources due to two basic reasons. First, in order to put into practice ME no technology is necessary. Second, to build up a small and simple, but complete laboratory to develop ME practices only a few thousand Euros would be necessary. This is especially true for those countries where technological innovation has been promoted in schools. Moreover, «resources» do not exclusively refer to funding and Euros, but also refers to the school's community assets related to management, planning and motivation. At the same time, school community includes not only technical staff, faculty, and students, but also local partners and families. In a sense, non financial resources are even more crucial than funding for two reasons again. On one hand, in more than a decade, we have seen to a greater extent the emergence of «good practices» that were based on organizational resources (which are necessary), rather than financial resources (which are important, but not essential). On the other hand, only good organization at schools can ensure the success of ME practices, because extra-curricular

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activities are often detached from normal daily teaching, and in most cases, they are merely a pleasant and enjoyable educational experience with no clear educational aims (albeit interesting and, in some way, formative).

In our view, the issue of organization is crucial. ME should not be thought of in a generic way so that it can be planned with more rigor and structure. After all, citizenship should be argued to be ME's ultimate aim and if the former is considered in a general and vague manner then this leads to ME also being thought of as a vague discipline.

The concept of organization implies the idea of «system-school», referring to the school's 'network building' capability and to the teachers' organizational and planning capacities as well as to the teachers' capacity to integrate ME into the curriculum and, finally, the teachers and students' capacities of, respectively, organizing their teaching and learning by the use of media to structure and make more meaningful the relationship between knowledge, skills and competences.

The organizational issue is closely related to the issue of motivation. As well known, teachers and school-system's levels of motivation profoundly affect students' desires to learn and participate. Moreover, teachers' motivation levels may vary according to the length of time they been teaching, whether they are supplementary, in service teachers, or teachers nearing the end of their careers. Furthermore, a desire to create change is the most important lever for introducing ME into schools. As we mentioned earlier, change may occur through the restructuring of daily teaching, although there are still many people who believe that teaching cannot be innovative if done every day. In short, the idea that learning and teaching processes during a school year should be based on discontinuity, is still persistent in schools. And researchers should recognize that the concept of discontinuity can also represent an advantage within a clear design that allows, for a 'journey' full of revisions, 'stops' and uncertainties. However, although the school life is characterized by many unexpected events, at least some of the objectives pursued by schools are stable. In fact schools' goals fall within a system which aims to preserve aspects of tradition, slowness, linearity, and only occasionally these goals are pursued within an innovative, rapid and modular learning environment. Briefly, if we are allowed, the school should be, in all its complexity, like both 'earth' (where the simple daily activities take place, where the book and the traditional lecture still preserve their legitimacy with their extraordinary power) and 'sea', that is an imaginary space where special events and playful learning experiences take place.

As claimed by Bonaiuti[1], in a personal learning environment there are communication and sharing systems, systems to manage and support group work, online individual production tools, devices for collaborative

[1] Bonaiuti G. (Ed.), *E-learning 2.0. Il futuro dell'apprendimento in rete, tra formale e informale*, Erickson, Trento 2006.

knowledge building and networking as well as immersive and tridimensional environment for simulations. This is like a «playful machine» that shakes all the schools' actors, producing new blood, which leads to the future, but it cannot be 'turned on' everyday of the year, due to rigid school organizations and structures.

For these reasons, today there is a very open debate among teachers and experts on whether to 'graft' ME in the 'belly' of the disciplines (alternating and interweaving teaching about and through the media) or, for the moment, make do with the introduction of ME across disciplines, like a bridge, creating a connection between history, literature, sports, non-verbal and verbal expressions, geography and chemistry.

However, today, Europe and other national governments seem to suggest the need to think in a systematic way for creating a ME curriculum. The last ten years of schooling in the new millennium would indicate that to create a curriculum based around ME is now possible. Many researchers, teachers and experts have pondered this possibility for a long time (not least the Italian Association to Media Education - MED), despite the cuts in funding in the education world have had a profound negative impact on teachers' motivation and enthusiasm. Leveraging on intrinsic motivation can be argued that, beyond the usual problems, as early as kindergarten, a basic «curriculum about technology» (oriented to the basic of media literacy rather than to the complexity which characterizes ME activities in its wider meaning) can be designed, including activities based on WebQuest, blogs, podcasting, wikis, You Tube and online learning environments[2].

The curriculum issue raises in turn the question of the relationship between skills and competences. The difficulty to translate the Lisbon recommendations into the individual European countries through the national policies and the local schools' interventions, makes researchers, teachers, and stakeholders 'play it by ear' waiting for a better and more clear definition of the relations between media, competences and educational innovation. If we are referring to the development of critical understanding, including a number of crucial abilities and skills (e.g., being able to focus or formulate adequate questions after reading or listening to a text, to analyze issues and topics of a text evaluating their relevance and assessing sources' credibility, to be able to evaluate the consistency of other people's reasoning, to make decisions while considering consequences, and to decide to pursue a particular action[3]), the issues at stake are vital and we should not waste anymore time.

The teaching profession becomes doubly important in the present day for two reasons. First, in many cases, the teacher represents the unique point of reference for many children and young people because they spend most

[2] Tanoni I., Tesio R., *Il curricolo tecnologico*, Trento, Erickson 2009, pp. 115-184.
[3] Ennis quoted in Boda G., Mosiello F., *Life skills: il pensiero critico*, Carocci, Roma 2005, p. 32.

of the day at school. Moreover, the teacher should also recognize talents in a world that seems to be split on two sides: the educational and protective school environment, on one hand, and the rich and extremely seductive media environment 'outside'. One of the priorities of his/her profession asks the teacher to identify the students' critical thinking attitudes such as intellectual curiosity, flexibility, ability to think and operate in a systematic way, the ability to analyze, the value based approach to knowledge, self-esteem and, also, the ability to trust in other people.

Here, under certain conditions, which should be highlighted more by academic research, the media can act as a 'good ally'. Indeed, working on media and media languages can promote the emergence of students' critical thinking attitudes and, in effect, even in the teacher (in the sense of being able to criticize their own work).

In these final remarks, we cannot go back in detail on the issue of competence and particularly on media competence. However, it should be reminded that there are four dimensions of competence: cognitive, affective, social, and motor. There are many theoretical models that combine these dimensions, thus going a step further than simply distributing them into a list and recognizing their weight and the relationships among them. In other cases researchers talk about an alliance between cognitive, metacognitive, and motivational elements, thus emphasizing the individual self-regulation attitudes[4].

The issue of competences implicates the question of evaluation. As suggested by Vertecchi:

> [...] teachers' opinions are directly or indirectly influenced by theoretical, political, and cultural considerations, referring to a general interpretation of social relations, labour organization, and scientific and technical development's directions[5].

In this context, teachers' training becomes crucial and teachers can no longer limit to denigrate the media, if only because they now belong to the cultural universe of contemporaries societies. Teachers should harness the relationship between school and society through educational choices influenced and supported by complex systems of values, which «allow each teacher to develop an idea of his/her mission»[6]. Here, through the collaboration with the national and international school community, teachers should then be able to reformulate their own priorities and those of their students.

[4] Trinchero R., *Manuale di ricerca educativa*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2002.
[5] Vertecchi B., *Manuale della valutazione*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2003, p. 37.
[6] *Ibidem*.

We now discuss the aspect of opportunities.

First of all, contemporary teachers should rethink their own role, promoting students' capacity to integrate in a constructive way thoughts, feelings, and actions[7]. This could be a first stimulating step to find new motives for professional lives.

Furthermore, teachers should take on a modus operandi closer to the scientific way of thinking and doing. Indeed, in teaching activity:

> [...] practice comes before theory: teachers seize the importance of reflective attitudes and sometimes they do act consequently, but do not have a systematic knowledge of the pursued approach[8].

Reflexivity thus becomes a tool to improve teaching quality, but also a dimension that enhances inherently the educational practice, supporting planning (entailing a relationship between documentation and design) and monitoring (involving a relationship between documentation and evaluation)[9]. Teachers should understand that systematic approaching and creativity are not conflicting dimensions of their profession. This 'attitude' should also include the ability to 'believe in' and enable networks on the territory to gradually reduce the «in-out» school difference, bringing new ideas to improve learning environments. We should assume that, from kindergarten up to high school, classes may, on several occasions during the year, become «editorial classes» (i.e., groups of students reflecting and producing various «text» types, within a context where the school plays the role of editor) involving an organization able to communicate with the around territory and make public its work, by the use of both non-verbal and multimedia languages.

As stated by Buckingham:

> Students following Media Studies courses and in the UK secondary schools are generally required to undertake at least two major production projects as part of their examination. They might produce a magazine or a newspaper, make a video or a website, produce a photographic exhibition or an advertising campaign, or make a radio show; and they also have to produce a piece of writing to accompany this, which will explain their objectives, evaluate what they have achieved, and reflect on the process of production, in the of the

[7] Novak J. D., Gowin D. B., *Learning how to learn*, Cambridge University Press, New York 1984.

[8] Montalbetti K., *La pratica riflessiva come ricerca educativa per l'insegnante*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2005, p. 209.

[9] With regard to the relationship between teaching and research in education Calidoni emphasizes the pivotal role of teachers, while highlighting the need for teachers and researchers to share not only the methodological and institutional backgrounds, but also the «ethical context» where the educational responsibility takes place. See Calidoni P., *Insegnamento e ricerca in classe. L'inevitabile condivisione*, La Scuola, Brescia 2004.

> broader theories and critical approaches they will have encountered on the course. Such activities are often simulated: students are typically set tasks or assignments in which they are invited to «become» fictional media producers within defined circumstances, which themselves raise broader theoretical issues or problems[10].

We would also like to go further. We believe that all levels can operate in this way, albeit with some simplifications for lower levels of schooling, and not only for the final examination, but encouraging the use of media to study, research and produce, in the widest possible sense.

[10] Buckingham D., *Media education. Literacy, learning and contemporary culture*, Polity Press-Blackwell Publishing, London 2003, p. 127.

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[1] All the websites quoted in the book were verified on 1st September 2010.

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