

# Systematic Development of Media Education in Chile

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**Abstract:** Through this article we will describe how it has been possible for us to establish a formal scheme for the critical and creative analysis of mass media in education in Chile. This task was originally assumed by a university; then It was projected through the academic system to different geographic areas of our country.

**R6sum6:** Dans cet article nous vous decrirons comment nous avons pu etablir une m6thode d'analyse critique et inventive de l'etude des mass-medias dans ('education au Chili. Ce travail fut d'abord fait a l'unlverslt6 et par la suite diffuse, par le blais du systeme scolalre, a travers differents points strateglques au pays. Malgr6 le peu de confiance qu'Inspire le systeme scolaire aux chercheurs en matiere d'etude des medias, deux stages de formation alternative pour enseignants ont et6 integres au programme scolaire.

## BACKGROUND

### *Media Education: Not Really Believing the System*

Several aspects of Latin American reality have created an unreliable atmosphere around media education, and particularly toward education about television within the academic or scholarly system. In some cases it has, indeed, become antagonistic. Critical educational propositions such as Freire's in Brazil have resulted in media education being brought to the forefront of the education system. The school system has not been open to providing experiences in the analysis and criticism of mass media, nor for the analysis and criticism of the education system itself. Certainly the political system situation in the past decades and the military governments in our countries have not permitted the development of strategies for critical analysis; these have arisen with the support of the church and non-governmental organizations.

Changes have been happening and there are signs of more openness. In October, 1991 Latin American media experts met in Santiago, called together by UNESCO. Among the 48 participants were 18 academics from Communication or Education faculties of Latin American universities, and six participants from official educational organizations. One recommendation for educational ministries and universities emphasized the need to introduce communications education within the curricula of nursery schools, elementary schools, and high schools. It was also recommended that courses on communications education be included in the curricula of Communication and Education faculties in universities and colleges (Seminario, 1991).

*Context: CIME - Who We Are*

CIME - The Centre de Investigation de Medios para la Educacion (Investigation Centre for Media Education) has been working in media education since 1982, when it offered training to students through an educational social-communication project. It is an academic unit that belongs to the Science of Education Faculty of the Universidad de Playa Ancha de Ciencias de la Educacion in Valparaiso, Chile. CIME is oriented to improving education qualitatively through research related to educational use of communication media, and particularly mass media. The purpose is to develop and promote research about mass media as cultural agents from outside the formal education system that are capable of being used with educative criteria. Objectives of CIME include (a) to qualitatively improve education through research in media education; (b) to develop strategies, methods, and techniques for educational approaches to mass media; (c) to develop plans and programs to teach media education at the university and abroad; (d) to diffuse research and activities through publications and other media inside and outside the university; and (e) to communicate with other such centers or institutions within Chile and abroad.

CIME members are teachers within the university who carry out research and conduct theses or seminars on media education coordinated by the Center, and also teachers and researchers from abroad dealing with communication, media, and/or education who are interested in working within the framework of CIME objectives.

From the beginning there was an awareness that the real starting point for future permanent action in media education was the training of teachers in the development of methodologies and techniques to be used in schools. Several inservice workshops and courses were given to teachers by the Center between 1982 and 1987. A systematic program "Media for Education: TV and Computing" was created to satisfy the urgent need among teachers for such training. This post-title program is aimed at creating an integrated educator; one who is able to develop awareness and to manage the most recent information, image, and sound technologies to improve education qualitatively.

However, the post-title program only permits the Center to satisfy the needs of teacher-students who live quite near the university campus, and not the needs that the school system has in places far from the urban centers. A workshop

entitled Education for Television was developed to solve problems found in relation to TV influence in the school system. The workshop makes use of distance education technology, training teachers through a short period of actual presence, self-instructional materials, and videotaped programs as complementary support.

### *Our Conceptual Bases*

The work in teacher training is based on the concept of media education. This is understood as a discipline which enables the media perceiver to develop the capacity of critical and creative analysis of mass media messages and apply this capacity with educational criteria to allow autonomous behavior of the person as a final goal.

Our activity is based on this concept, which is framed within the taxonomical model of Dynamic Reading of Signs developed in Latin America by Maria Josefa Dommguez. The model involves five consecutive steps: education for objectivity (denotation); education for subjectivity (connotation); education for critical analysis (reflection); education for transforming answers (action-compromise); and education for new experiences (creativity) (Dommguez, 1990).

Alternative strategies for action are also recognized for media education. These are in accordance with the scheme developed by Golay (1988), as follows: knowledge about producers and their language (the different agents involved in the production of communication and the knowledge of the language of the media); image-reading skills (development of and training in skills and aptitudes for perceiving and processing available symbols as quickly as possible); and self-analysis and awareness (consciousness about receiver motivations or the reasons they relate to the media in certain ways).

The specific activity aimed at training teachers is one thrust among many others in media education. We have carried out projects on the family and television and on television education through the use of television (Reyes, Dennis, & Mendez, 1990). We are committed to training teachers because we ourselves are educators and we work in an institution that prepares educators. We also believe that teachers are the educative agents who can best introduce changes in the education system.

## TRAINING INSERVICE TEACHERS: TWO ALTERNATIVES

### *Post-title Media for Education: TV and Computing*

In 1987 the post-title program "Medios para la Educacion: Television y Computation" was created at the Sciences of Education Faculty, Universidad de Playa Ancha de Ciencias de la Educacion.

The program is structured in six courses during three academic semesters. It is offered as inservice for teachers, and for that reason classes are provided on an evening schedule once weekly, with complementary readings and activities.

The teacher-students begin with an analysis of media impact on the school system. They review theoretical models of different authors, different methodologies and study media languages, finally designing and implementing selected methodologies to solve problems in their own reality. The program allows the teacher-students to solve problems that the media create among their students, and also allows them to generate other solutions in either a wider context or within the classroom in the future.

The six courses are as follows:

Media Education, the Educator and New Technologies  
 The Language of Media  
 Media Impact on Children and Teenagers  
 Media Education Methodologies  
 Curricular Design Related to Media Education  
 Educating with Media (Workshop)

The workshop, which is the final course, involves a terminal activity where the teacher-students carry out their own projects on media education. They are academically supported by the teachers of the program in designing, applying, and evaluating their methodological propositions based on the knowledge gained in the program. To date three groups of teacher-students have completed the program, a fourth group started in the second semester, 1991, and two new groups began in March, 1992.

Since the program began teacher-students have completed final projects related to a number of key problems such as advertising influence on choice of snacks in nursery and elementary schools, acoustic pollution and youth, TV addiction, self-esteem and its relation to models proposed by the media, and clothing consumerism. They have verified these problems and designed and carried out their own methodological solutions. Teacher-student projects have resulted in actions, within the schools where they work, such as media education units within the school curriculum and extra-curricular workshops with students or parents. In this way the university is supporting the direct implementation and the use of abilities acquired by teachers in their specialization programs.

One particular example of the action taken by a teacher-student occurred at Juan XXIII High School in El Belloto - a small city approximately 25 kilometers from Valparaiso. Sixteen and seventeen year olds were creating their own broadcast television production within the high school, preparing live and videotaped programs with the help of the teacher. Audiences for the production work included other high school students and neighbours living within 500 meters of the high school.

#### *Distance Workshop on Educational Use of TV*

During the past decade several activities have been implemented to train teachers in media education. These range from short meetings to systematic post-title programs. One of the earliest experiences was the development of a workshop

in the education of television viewers, undertaken with the support of the Ministry of Education.

In 1990 we completed a research project, the aim of which was to describe the influence of television on the academic system in the Valparaíso region and to develop strategies for critical and creative analysis, and educative use of television (Reyes-Mendez, 1989). Based upon the background and the thinking of teachers who live far from the university, we created a workshop on education for television. The aim of the workshop is to prepare teachers in critical and creative analysis of television messages for application to education.

The workshop is planned to be delivered partly through live experience and partly via distance. The live experience includes a first meeting of one half day, a support meeting of one half day, an intensive workshop of four days, and an evaluation or feedback meeting of one half day. These meetings take place at the locations of teachers. Interspersed with these meetings is a series of work experiences including four self-instructional workbooks and a series of videotaped television programs.

Participants include two teacher guides, one coordinator for each school that participates, and approximately twenty teacher-students. The structure involves working in groups, and teacher-students are expected to generate teams in their schools, so that they can support each other, plan, and carry out their methodological strategies.

During the first step, beginning with the initial meeting, teacher-students work on the knowledge aspects of television and on identifying problems that arise from the media in the scholarly system. The first and second workbooks - *What is TV* and *Where is the Problem*—support this first step. The outcome is the identification and simple description of problems that television generates in their own scholarly reality. A short support meeting permits the exchanging of criteria for describing problems in an educational way. Using the third workbook — *How to Analyse Television* — during the following weeks teacher-students analyse a taxonomical model to order and state priorities of television problems inside school, and the educational objectives they want to aim at. The fourth workbook — *Searching Solutions* — is used in the planning of educational strategies as a reference for reaching their own solutions to the problems they earlier described and prioritized.

The in-person workshop allows for interaction among groups of teacher-students and guides teachers to consolidate theoretical models of media education, to make use of group dynamics to reach and solve detected problems, and to design solution strategies. The putting into practice and validation of designed strategies usually lasts from two to four weeks.

The feedback and evaluation meeting allows for the recycling of the experiences gained in the workshop, the visualizing of new problems and solution strategies beyond those implemented during the workshop, and also the evaluation of the workshop objectives. Evaluation is done through a report written by the teacher-students regarding the construction, implementation, and evaluation of their particular strategies in their own schools.

The most significant achievement of this alternative for training teachers is related to the space generated for media education within the school system. In addition media education is based on the development of a methodological approach to solving problems in any reality, beginning with a theoretical model implemented jointly by university teachers and school system teachers. The interaction of both groups has permitted a permanent revision of the conceptual framework, integrating experiences from different realities.

There have been some difficulties. The low economic resources of teacher-students to be admitted to the post-title program is one. Even though the program cost is low (\$330.00 USA) it is expensive for the teachers' budget. Another difficulty is the physical distance from the teachers' work settings and the university. This year the systematic post-title program is to be offered in an additional site — San Felipe — a small city 140 km. from Valparaiso.

The systematic program has another difficulty - that of forming teams to work together inside scholarly units. Teacher-students of the systematic program generally study as a personal decision, and it is unusual to find more than one from each school. When they try to carry out media education activities in the school there is no support. We believe that preparing teams in each school may facilitate media education. Institutional commitment is needed for permanent results of research and implementation of awareness strategies to become part of the schools' educative process.

## MEDIA EDUCATION AS A SUBJECT IN THE CURRICULA OF FUTURE TEACHERS

### *As an Optional Course*

CIME research during the early years did not result in an immediate change in teacher education at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The rigid curriculum of Universidad de Playa Ancha de Ciencias de la Educacion does not permit the introduction of modifications. The first courses on media education were thus introduced in a private university — the Catholic University of Valparaiso—as elective courses. Since 1983 several courses on media education have been offered, including Education of the TV Viewer, Education and Social Communication and Learning to See Television. These courses are attractive to pedagogy students, and assigned vacancies are filled each semester. To date more than 15 courses have been offered, with an average of thirty students in each course. To this time the courses remain as electives. We know that similar circumstances prevail in other universities in Latin America. Media education courses are scarce in colleges and faculties of education. Courses that do exist are mainly placed in communication faculties, and are offered to future journalists and social communicators.

### *In the Formal Curriculum*

During the past year the Universidad de Playa Ancha de Ciencias de la Educacion has been reviewing the desired profile of its future professionals. As a result the curriculum has been restructured. After ten years of systematic research on media education, a course on Education and Social Communication has been introduced as a requirement for pedagogy students at the nursery, elementary, and high school levels.

As of 1992 all future teachers who study at this university will complete Education and Social Communication. It is significant to point out that the Universidad de Playa Ancha de Ciencias de la Educacion is assuming a pioneer position, being the first in Chile, and perhaps in Latin America, to include a required course in media education on pedagogy programs. Because of this we can visualize a future with several scholarly classrooms where children work with mass media and develop their abilities to express themselves in a critical, active, and creative way through mass media, guided by teachers with a vision beyond that of defending children against "those horrible mass media."

We are worried because in the Latin American and in our own national context there is still not an awareness of the need to prepare teachers in media education. But we feel stimulated by the growth of awareness in some Chilean and Latin American authorities with ties to the education area, who are becoming conscious of how important it is that educators develop abilities to creatively and critically analyze mass media.

We expect that more and more teachers will participate in systematic programs and workshops that enable them to use television and mass media with educative criteria. We believe that educational systems should introduce strategies that enable them to prepare students for the twenty-first century, to be able to use the cultural resources offered through the media according to their needs and within the conceptual framework of permanent education. We feel impelled to introduce new information, image, and sound technologies in a systematic educational process. Otherwise we run the risk of preparing children and youth for the year 2000 by looking back at Gutenberg.

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