Media Education and Audiovisual Creative Practices Between Formal and Non-Formal Education: The Proposal for a Teaching Model for High Schools

Educazione mediale e pratiche creative audiovisive tra formale e non formale: La proposta di un modello didattico per le scuole secondarie di II grado

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to reflect on the theme of visual education through the analysis of digital storytelling practices conceived in a non-formal environment and subsequently carried out in mixed formal/non-formal areas. The reflection starts with educational and research projects involving an entire community within which an integrated educational environment was built (school, local area, municipal institution, university). On the basis of specific projects this environment was useful for the implementation of a dynamic educational/training process, thanks to the presence, in the formal didactic setting, of training practices specific to the non-formal setting. This path allowed the creation of an educational model useful for carrying out media education activities, focused on the educational potential of "doing". The model is based on the classic audiovisual production process combining a series of indications coming from the paradigms of Media education, from the indications of the Digital civic education curriculum, from DigComp2.2, all the useful information for the world of schools in light of the recent National Cinema Plan for Schools.

Obiettivo dell'articolo è riflettere sul tema dell'educazione visiva attraverso l'analisi di pratiche di digital storytelling nate in ambiente non formale e successivamente svolte in territori misti formali/non formali. La riflessione parte da progetti educativi e di ricerca che hanno coinvolto una comunità intera all'interno della quale è stato costruito un ambiente educativo integrato (scuola, territorio, istituzione comunale, università). Tale ambiente sulla base di specifici progetti è stato utile alla messa in pratica di un processo educativo/formativo dinamico, grazie alla presenza, nel setting didattico formale, di pratiche formative proprie del contesto non formale. Tale percorso è stato utile alla creazione di un modello didattico funzionale allo svolgimento di attività di educazione mediale, incentrate sulle potenzialità didattiche del fare. Il modello si fonda sul classico processo produttivo di un audiovisivo che intreccia una serie di indicazioni provenienti dai paradigmi della media education, dalle indicazioni del curriculum di educazione civica digitale, dal piano cinema nazionale per la scuola, dal digComp2.2. Tutte le indicazioni utili al mondo della scuola (ma anche dell'extrascuola) alla luce del recente piano nazionale Cinema per la scuola.

KEYWORDS
Media education, Visual education, Digital skills, Cinema for school, Videomaking
Educazione mediale, Educazione visuale, Competenze digitali, Cinema per la scuola, Fare video

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1. Introduction

The starting point is the issue of media education, which is now considered a crucial requirement of contemporary citizenship and therefore a fundamental right of students. This discipline does not concern the use of media as tools or teaching aids and is not about alerting citizens to bad behaviour that the media seem to encourage (protectionist attitude), nor about allowing the development of technical skills. Rather, it is about fostering the development of reading skills and critical understanding of the media and therefore of the world (Buckingham, 2020).

Media education is part of the contemporary cultural landscape characterized by media consumption phenomena, especially in the young age groups, considered to be high. From this derive the following names to indicate the generations born starting from the end of the 1990s, whose members are generally children of Generation X (1965-1979): Net Generation, Millennials, Digital Natives, Instant-Message Generation, Generation Y, Gamer Generation, Screen Generation, I-Generation, Z Generation, Zoomers, Digitarians, iGen. More time is now spent on media than on any other activity, including sleeping (Buckingham, 2020). The guidelines connected with the *National plan for film in schools* that we will refer to herein state that

> "in the Middle Ages an ordinary person came into contact with on average just over 40 artificial images during his/her life and how, today, the same person on average comes into contact with about 600,000 artificial images every day" (MiBACT & MIUR, 2018).

The same guidelines point out that young people do not have the conceptual tools to consciously interpret, decode and use this incredible mass of images. The reason for the need for educational intervention on media comes from these considerations.

1.1 The conceptual framework

The relationship between media and education can be split, according to a pedagogical-didactic distinction, into two conceptual frameworks, linked to two different paradigms: a technological one – education with media – and the other semiological – education on media.

Education with media concerns the use of technologies (photographic, audiovisual, IT, multimedia) to support the teaching/learning processes of the different school subjects in relation to their representative potential of the phenomenal reality. The lesson or part of it is increased, integrated or replaced with video games, educational videos, documentaries, multimedia products, etc. This technological paradigm has resulted in an educational perspective based on the technological characteristics of the media (asynchronous recording/use, synchronous transmission/use of messages with different signalling substance) that is capable of triggering innovations both in in-school teaching and learning activities and in the transfer of school or education to the media, for example with distance learning. In practice, media can contribute to improving both the methods of didactic communication between teachers and students, and the didactics of the subjects by helping the processes of perception-presentation, analysis-description, abstraction-schematization, synthesis-symbolization of phenomenal reality (Galliani, 2015).

Education on media or media literacy considers the media to be central as "objects of study" for investigating the languages (photographic, cinematographic, television, audiovisual, graphic, sound, computer, multimedia, etc.) and methods used to build meanings in the various application fields. This paradigm, which concerns the development of critical skills functional to the ability to interpret and decode media texts, has promoted, over the years, the creation in compulsory schools of curricular continuity (image education, music education, motor education, technological education) and in secondary schools of specialized disciplinary pathways, visual arts, music, drama, film, television, of new media (Galliani, 2015).

Increasingly, the learning of these skills is linked, in teaching practices, to that of media writing, in terms of the ability to produce digital artifacts responsibly and consciously using a specific language (photographic, cinematographic, television, audiovisual, graphic, sound, computer, multimedia, etc.), appropriate technologies and in accordance with the regulations in force. This methodology implies that knowing how to read and write media must inevitably be related. Not because the production of audiovisual or multimedia texts is the aspect that most easily meets with the enthusiasm of students, but because creative practice can be used as a stimulus to encourage the development of knowledge that can help the reading and understanding of media and therefore of the world. In this way a practice that finds the enthusiasm of young people can be directed towards the development of critical thinking, shifting the focus from a technological problem to a question of multi-literacy in order to foster, in the indications of Ofcom (2023), "the ability to use, understand and create media and communications in a variety of contexts." In this work we will refer to this second area.

1.2 Film becomes part of the educational curriculum: legislative measures

We will now look at how the legislative interventions on film and audiovisual area in Italy in recent years have addressed the problem of media education (that is, the two Laws: *Legge 107/2015*, Articles 1.7.c and 181.g et seq.; *Legge 220/2016*, Section "Film and Audiovisual Matters"). Emphasis is placed on the need to integrate school education with the study of audiovisual and media languages, given that through these languages students receive messages and absorb perspectives, values, behaviour, and attitudes. As mentioned, their representation of the world derives from that environment.

Legge 107/2015 proposed by the Renzi Government as part of the "*La buona scuola* [The Good School]" campaign of reforms includes among the priority objectives the enhancement of skills in musical practice and culture, art and art history, film, te-

chniques and media for the production and dissemination of images and sounds, also through the involvement of museums and other public and private institutions operating in these sectors (*Legge 107/2015*, Art. 7.c). The State perceives the structural weakness of the Italian school towards film literacy despite the interventions of recent years on the subject of visual education. On the one hand the implementing rules of the law tend to counter iconic illiteracy by building an audiovisual culture to educate a conscious audience, foster critical understanding of the present and communicate with the ongoing digital revolution (https://cinemaperlascuola.istruzione.it/il-progetto/).

In a subsequent intervention (*Legge 220/2016*, Art. 3.1.i) clarifies that the State supports film literacy in schools through a joint project between the *Ministry of Culture* and the *Ministry for Education, University and Research*. In addition, the law provides for support of a total amount of 3% of the *Film and Audiovisual Fund* (corresponding to at least EUR 12 million) for "reinforcing skills in film, techniques and media for the production and dissemination of images and sounds, as well as literacy in art, techniques and media for the production and dissemination of images" (*Legge 2020/2016*, Art. 27.1.I). Regardless of the amount of resources, it is nevertheless an important sign that a resource base to invest in this area has been established.

This legislative intervention gives rise, for the implementation of Articles 3 and 27, to *the National Plan for Film and Images for School* (CIPS), the result of a Memorandum of Understanding, signed on 2 March 2018, between the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and activities and the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MiBACT & MIUR, 2018). The plan's initiatives aim to introduce cinematographic and audiovisual language in schools of all levels (with the aim of enabling the acquisition of tools and methods of analysis that promote knowledge of the grammar of images and awareness of the nature and specificity of their functioning), as an educational tool that facilitates learning and is used across curricular pathways. The latest version of the Memorandum of Understanding of 10 August 2021, subsequent to the Memorandum of Understanding of 16 June 2021, signed by the Directorate-General for Film and Audiovisual education of the Ministry of Culture and the Directorate-General for organizational design, innovation of administrative processes, communication and contracts of the *Ministry of Education and Merit*, in line with what was already contemplated in the implementation of the previous Memoranda of Understanding, set out as an objective "reinforcing skills in film, techniques and media for the production and dissemination of images and sounds in the school community" (Ministero dell'Istruzione & Ministero della Cultura, 2021). To achieve this objective, in addition to the preparation of training courses, differentiated by level of school and age range, the selection and training of teachers is also considered. The following are the guidelines for film in school as outlined in the protocol:

1. promoting the recognition of the acquisition of film skills by prospective teachers, also considering the introduction of the credit obligation in film disciplines for teachers of literary subjects in schools of all levels, in order to ensure specific expertise in the analysis and transmission of audiovisual culture[1]:
2. establishing a comprehensive teacher training plan providing those who have already had access to education with the necessary tools and skills to carry out informed transmission of audiovisual knowledge;
3. promoting research and education on the subject of audiovisual education and media literacy, also through investments in dedicated research projects to be developed at national and international level;
4. promoting the inclusion of audiovisual media, also as a tool to support education, in the Italian school system, by setting up training courses differentiated by school level and age range;
5. including the study of the history of film, audiovisual language and film in the school curriculum, in line with the course offered by the school;
6. setting up and/or implementing audiovisual laboratories in schools, where the student can undertake a pathway starting from the creation of the script and moving on with the creation of video footage, photography, the study of sound and audiovisual editing and the learning of the basics of post-production, thus becoming capable of designing, creating and finalising an audiovisual product;
7. providing for work placement opportunities in the audiovisual sector as part of the educational activity, encouraging students to meet with representatives of the audiovisual profession;
8. creating a web platform, also through the Experimental Centre of Cinematography and the National Film Archive, where teaching materials and film texts can be made available to participating schools to support educational and research activities related to the project, linking them with all the necessary sheets and critical equipment and places for share the works and essays developed by the different participating schools, according to similar experiences already active in other European countries.

The national plan for film in schools (CIPS, 2023) contemplates in practice:

1. "cascade" training activities at successive training levels: a centrally managed first level aimed at forming a group of "experts", who should, in turn, train the teachers of each state school (2 or 3 per institution) in the local area, for a total of about 16,000 "visual education workers";
2. the issuing of calls for tenders addressed to schools of all levels and professionals in the sector to support the inclusion of film and audiovisual teaching in educational pathways, also through labo-

1 The Experimental Centre for Cinematography and other training institutions with a strong establishment of cinematographic and visual studies could be identified as the most suitable entities for defining and delivering specific training pathways. The teaching material could be added to an online database, which could accompany the in-person training and facilitate the circulation of experience.

ratory activities in collaboration with professionals in the sector, and to promote festivals, exhibitions and innovative educational initiatives, dedicated to the world of school;
3. creation of an institutional web platform (cinemaperlascuola.istruzione.it), a single large container of educational pathways and materials, tenders, audio-video materials, learning objects, training courses and any other useful tools for initiating the visual education pathways at school.

These legislative measures are to be welcomed, and it is emphasised that schools must be confronted with visual languages, central to the representation of the world and still not widely studied by the generations living in the knowledge and information society. Despite past educational media interventions, students do not yet possess the skills that are functional to moving critically in media reading.

However, observing these actions, it is clear that the light of this consideration has been blurred by the shadows of an approach that seems to be struggling to get an up-to-date picture of the situation and tends rather to refer to categories that do not necessarily keep up with not only developments in the media sector (it is important not to create hierarchies between audiovisual forms of communication with film at the top and the latest forms of video communication such as those within TikTok at the bottom) but also with advanced pedagogical reflection (see media education research activities). Above all, there is a risk that the young people who are targeted by these projects will not be interested.

In addition, the guidelines reflect the current situation without giving any indication of how to intervene, leaving this task to planning by schools. For this reason, we believe that pedagogical research can make an important contribution, especially if it brings together the experiences of visual education conducted between formal and non-formal setting with the indications of the National Plan for Film in Schools.

2. The operational proposal: implementing media and educational practices straddling formal and non-formal settings

The aim of our proposal is to include media within constructive didactics, focusing on the real task/problem solving and on learning by doing, to prevent the laboratory activity from becoming exclusively recreational and instrumental.

In recent decades there has been increased interest in authentic learning – otherwise defined as a reality or real-life task, a performance task, an expert task, a task in the situation, a professional task (Tessaro, 2014) - focused on the balance between theory and practice, investigation and the resolution of problems in a constructivist perspective. Based on the premise that people learn best in context (Dewey, 1997) such training has evolved into a solid teaching model based on complex and realistic learning tasks (Herrington & Herrington, 2007; Lombardi, 2007) and is recognised as an approach that can be used to facilitate the acquisition of skills transferable to real life. In practice, an attempt is made to allow students to generalise, transfer and use what they know (declarative knowledge) and what they can do (skills) to solve real and concrete problems in specific contexts, so that they can demonstrate and practice what they have acquired (how they do it) in a certain subject area.

2.1 A case study: History through multimedia in secondary schools

The reflection starts from a series of educational and research experiences, lasting several years, performed by the Laboratory of Educational Technologies of the University of Ferrara (Ganino & La Vecchia, 2013; Ganino, 2015) and involving an entire community (a town of 15,000 inhabitants). Within this community an integrated environment has been built (school, territory, municipal institution, associations, universities, students) functional to the implementation of a dynamic media-educational process thanks to the presence, in the formal didactic setting, of educational practices specific to the non-formal context (Galliani, 2011): the school has thus been able to implement real-life learning methods and use social and work-related languages, tools and codes (Jonassen, 2002; Petrucco, 2010). All the above is fostered by the establishment of a multimedia laboratory, "Spazio Giovani", managed by a cultural association (Open Media Educational) in collaboration with the Municipality of Argenta and the University of Ferrara, focusing on the concepts of digital citizenship and active participation. The laboratory, structured like a television production, based on a specific protocol, designed, and managed educational and cultural activities focusing on media practices such as video productions, creation of a territorial television platform (*argentaTV*) and related contents, the creation of a memory archive focusing on video testimonies of citizens (*lastoriaseitu*) etc. Thanks also to the involvement of numerous trainees enrolled on the degree courses in Educational and Communication Sciences, the laboratory supported schools of all levels in the local area on media education activities carried out at school, in extracurricular activities, in mixed mode.

2.1.1. History through multimedia in secondary schools

In this setting the group of students involved (a high school class) was called upon to solve a real problem (Dewey, 1997; Freire, 1974, Freinet, 1977; 1978) using video technologies and applications 2.0 (YouTube in particular): building a place functional to participatory reflection, by school and the civil society, on a period of recent history of the local area. The main instrument of this educational experience was the testimony, recorded using of a video interview, of those who personally experienced episodes related to the subject being investigated.

In light of these assumptions, the experimentation required the narrations produced by the students to be a fundamental part of the teaching/learning process based on the revision of the principles of the transmissive lesson, central to the frontal lesson, and the promotion of active learning through the principles of learning by doing. The educational design in-

cluded a pathway based on learning subject knowledge, participatory and collaborative activities on and offline, learning technical skills, and educational media. All through a cooperative reorganization of learning that transformed the class into a creative laboratory with a process focusing on continuous reflection on the didactic-productive process based on precise expected learning objectives (disciplinary, and educational media) (see the paragraph on the didactic meanings of video making).

The subject area involved was history and the specific topic *Resistance and the liberation struggle during the Second World War*. The population of Argenta (in the province of Ferrara) was affected by some episodes that occurred at the end of the Second World War, causing several victims and the almost total disappearance, following a bombing, of the urban fabric; the most dramatic episode is known as *The battle of Argenta Gap*.

The hypothesis of the experimentation was that participatory practices (video production-sharing-socialisation) included within a context of dynamic learning, can, on the one hand, increase the degree of interest and involvement of the students and, on the other, have a positive influence on disciplinary knowledge (the learning of history), and on cross-curricular knowledge (the conscious use of technologies and media).

2.1.2. Learning history with video interviews and social media: description of the laboratory pathway

The main instrument of this educational experience was the testimony, recorded using a video interview, of those who personally experienced episodes related to recent history. The project included the following phases:

1. design of media-educational didactic activities;
2. carrying out the laboratory activity;
3. analysis of the artifacts produced through their consultation and interviews with students (digital creative skills);
4. analysis of participatory activity through consultation of networking activities and interviews with students (digital skills);
5. analysis of the learning process (subject matter), by completing an open-ended questionnaire.

We are only interested in referring here to the part relating to the carrying out of the laboratory activity.

2.1.3. Carrying out the laboratory activity

The laboratory was designed according to the model of authentic learning or reality task, based on the balance between theory and practice, investigation, problem solving, and especially the idea that people learn best by doing (Dewey, 1997). The design of this teaching practice, based on knowledge, cognitive and practical skills in real-world situations or simulating real-world situations, has included a series of activities with the following characteristics (Reeves et al., 2002):

1. they are relevant in the real world, correspond as much as possible to what professionals do in their work practice;
2. they require high student involvement as the students have to work by defining the different steps that lead to the completion of the assigned task;
3. they involve a significant investment of time and cognitive resources, thus students must spend extended periods of time studying to solve the problems;
4. they stimulate students to examine the task from multiple perspectives and to use a variety of resources;
5. they provide the opportunity to work together;
6. they provide an opportunity to reflect on students' own learning;
7. they promote interdisciplinary skills;
8. they are integrated with the real-life assessment: the authentic assessment defined by Wiggins (1998);
9. they involve creating a product rather than simply performing exercises;
10. they allow different and mutually competing solutions.

This model also refers, as mentioned above, to overcoming transmissive teaching in favour of cooperative learning that turns the class into a creative laboratory and teachers into directors of the training situation. The process is not dominated by teaching (disciplinary and media) and the subsequent application of audiovisual grammar and syntax, first studying the rules and then applying them, but by the integration between the two moments: theoretical and practical.

The laboratory phases follow, which are managed in a complementary way by disciplinary teachers, researchers and media-educational operators, the specific contents of which have been partly planned, partly dictated by the specific contingencies due to the progress of the laboratory activity. The order also did not have a linear progression either, first phase one, then phase two, etc., but all the phases were covered at different times during the teaching period according to how the laboratory was proceeding. For convenience, we grouped together subject matter and cross-media educational activities according to a chronological pathway.

Subject matter (by the history teacher). The history professor introduced the topic of the battle of Argenta GAP, contextualizing it in a pathway related to the later stages of World War II. Her lesson was supplemented by a meeting with the historian Rino Moretti, author of the book *Argenta Gap. The final battle of the Italian campaign. April 1945* (2005).[2] The meeting with the stu-

2 In summary, the contents of the monographic section were subsequently supplemented with the view of the population who experienced those events. The Battle of Argenta Gap (1-19 April 1945) is one of the crucial and concluding episodes of the spring offensive of the 7th Army in Italy. The deployment of the opposing armies sees the Allied forces on one side, with Army Group XV under General Mark Clark; these were opposed by Army Group C under General Heinrich von Vietinghoff. The aim of the Allied forces was to quickly reach the River Po, and here, to defeat the German troops, forced to fight with the river behind them and no escape routes (all the bridges had been destroyed). The defences prepared by the Germans were focused on the remaining part of the Gothic Line and the Genghis Khan Line behind which the Argenta Gap had been created: an area in which the lower lying lands had been flooded and the higher ones tur-

dents took place during the design of the video products.

Audiovisual construction and representation of reality (by the researchers). The problem of audiovisual construction was addressed through staging procedures with the aim of creating awareness of the relationship between the video interviews and the representation of reality. Interviews are points of view and not objective factual reality, for example the possibility of making the manipulation of the footage invisible through editing. In particular, documentary genres tend to deny their nature of representation, act of enunciation, by integrating any cognitive purposes with a naturalisation of discourse (Casetti, 1986). Against or in favour of this deletion of the writing process, here are therefore the different filmmaking choices, depending on whether the interview is to be included in the category of scientific research or media communication.

More generally, it is important to point out that video testimonials are personal stories, stories experienced directly, the result of a subjective process, while the official story tends to recount events that change society and the world (Cicognetti et al., 2008). Nevertheless, all these personal stories contribute to enriching the historical narrative of a certain community, strengthen the sense of belonging of citizens and can provide new keys to interpreting historical research: oral history comes from the common people, it "includes life into history, thus broadens its scope. It chooses its protagonist from not only among the leaders, but also among the people who made up the majority" (Thompson, 1977, pp. 403 – 432).

Problems of media education and concept of representation in audiovisual communication (by the researchers). Some theoretical issues related to the use of oral sources in the reconstruction of the past were addressed, with the aim of creating awareness of the limitations of the use of video interviews/testimonials and digital storytelling for scientific purposes. It seemed appropriate to work on the relativisation of testimonials, soliciting reflections on the functions of memory, the stratification of life experiences, the limit of individual perspective in the reconstruction of events and the need for intersections and comparisons with other voices (Sarti & Vellani, 2008). Information on the taxonomies of oral sources was provided; Piero Brunello and Ivo Mattozzi (1982) developed a proposal for a classification on which historians and teachers now rely, and on video estimates, for which there is still no precise classification.

Implementation: creative approach (by the researchers and the history teacher). There were several interventions to support this phase: identification of the type of interview to be adopted, the elements of staging, the preparation of the interview track, the filming and the editing operations.

During the preparation phase, the most important decisions were about the type of interview to be used and the preparation of the relevant track. The choice fell on testimonials. This choice came from the search for people who experienced both first-hand and reflex episodes related to the historical phenomenon under investigation. The research was carried out using personal contacts (relatives of students and teachers) and the involvement of associations and citizens (a communication through the newspaper sent to all residents). It was decided to choose people with communication skills able to provide a relevant contribution. This need led to the need for casting before filming in order to identify "suitable" respondents.

The identification of the staging concerned several elements:

1. the construction of the shot (type of field and film plane, fixed or moving shot, type of photograph, camera or off-camera look);
2. the management of the relationship between the person being interviewed and the interviewer ;
3. the interview modes: short news interviews for gathering information on the basis of precise questions, or longer and more open feature interviews to address broad issues and complex concepts or to bring out the personality of the person interviewed;
4. type of editing: from the sequence plan to the decoupage according to the need to highlight or hide the writing process;
5. technologies to be used: shooting and editing;
6. interview tracking.

Implementation of testimonials. 10 people, 7 men and 3 women, were interviewed. The filming took place in the studio and at the protagonists' homes.

Video product implementation. At this stage, the criteria for the selection of significant segments (in relation to the objectives of the work) were better identified; initial paper editing was carried out to make possible cuts and break down the interviews into self-contained parts; then the final editing was carried out. The type of work required of the students was based on a cross-disciplinary approach. They had to make use of technical skills (making cuts and visual and sound connections through the use of video editing software), creative skills (choosing the type of direction and editing, choice of images to support the interviews, choice of music, etc.), content (identifying parts of interviews that are functional to the objectives of the project), regulations (respect for copyright rules, interviewed releases, use of copyleft music, etc.).

Opening and implementing the channel on YouTube, sharing and socialising. YouTube was chosen as circulation/sharing channel as this portal is the most emblematic in the expression of the culture of the participatory web. One of the most obvious signals of participatory culture is the activity of producing and sharing creations: those involved place a significant emphasis on the importance of their contribution and feel connected to each other in some way or at least interested in the views that others have of their productions (Jenkins et al., 2009). 2.0 technologies not only allow mainstream media stories to be enjoyed, but also offer the opportunity to "write your own

ned into deadly minefields, creating a narrow passage along the Adriatic highway n.16, which was difficult to cross (the gap). The battle caused the most tragic and devastating episode in the millennial history of the town of Argenta: 650 tonnes of explosive and incendiary bombs were dropped, causing the destruction of 75 – 80% of the urban fabric and hundreds of victims, including the dead and wounded.

story" (whether it's a blog post, a YouTube video, or even a sequence of messages on your Facebook wall), and then to advertise it and try to make it a feature of media space. Therefore, young people born in the era of Web2.0 are the first generation aware of their centrality in cultural processes that in this way become less industrial and aimed at niches of consumers, representative of different instances, traditions, beliefs and ways of life. We are faced with the creation of a new symbolic space, which Castells (2009) defines as "mass self-communication", rich in heterogeneous cultural forms, personal and collective content, individual stories in harmony, but also in contrast, and "almost mediated interaction" (Thompson, 1998) with the system of recognised sources. Some people wonder about the ability of self-regulated user-generated expression to evolve in contributing to the public cultural sphere and the growth of knowledge (Hartley, 2008). Finally, the reflections concerning the notion of a cultural product must be contextualised within the profound transformation concerning the centrality of communication exchange in the conversational media system (Peverini, 2012).

Production and participation as dominant practices on YouTube that cannot be overlooked by ongoing debates on the use of media in educational practices. It is now clear that YouTube plays an important role, on the one hand, in media history and in policies of cultural participation and knowledge-building, and, on the other, in activities that refer to the popular culture sector. The video portal therefore offers new opportunities for research on media education, presents epistemological and methodological challenges for the social sciences but also for the humanities and pedagogical science.

More generally, YouTube, in addition to facilitating authoritative practices and video sharing, allows the user to express preferences through simple likes/dislikes, to make criticisms or appreciations, or to build relationships through reactions to videos: tools for building relationships between users are tags, comments, video-responses, friending (the mutual request of a user to be friends), subscription to the channel which enables updates on content posted by a certain user, participation in collaborative videos or collaborative channels, shared between multiple users.

The teaching activity leaves the boundaries of the classroom to enter the real world and become an object of comparison and discussion. The intention to learn history by doing, as envisaged by the project, opens up to a wider dimension, becoming a project of collective history. Thanks to the potential of the Web, on the one hand, and didactic design according to the principles of Learning by doing, on the other, the students' activities play an important role in giving history the faces, the voice, the gestures and the expressions of those who still remember the atrocity and suffering. In order to allow historical memory not only to be preserved, but to become the subject of debate and discussion, Argenta's citizens were invited by students to watch videos, comment on them, suggest new ones, criticize them, and appreciate them. YouTube thus became, through the use of 2.0 pedagogies, a functional environment for the transmission of life stories and experiences, for reflection on the recent past, a place where, on the one hand, a sense of civic responsibility and democratic life practices can be developed, and, on the other hand, to strengthen the sense of the community.

3. The production process for educational purposes

Media production laboratory activities carried out at school must have a didactic or educational aim functional to the achievement of precise, subject-related and cross-disciplinary objectives. Audiovisual practice aimed at building messages in training and learning situations must be detached from an imitative aim (of the models/formats seen on television or on the internet) aimed at reproducing viewpoints functional to ideological aspects (imposed by the logic of publishing groups). Video production must not be an end in itself; the industrial process, which is functional to articulating the different operational phases, must, on the one hand, be functional to the implementation of instrumental, technical and creative aspects, and, on the other, be targeted towards the didactic and educational objectives. In this sense, the typical operations of the audiovisual construction process (from idea to distribution) must be based, in Galliani's indications (1984b, p. 182), on precise methodological criteria: logical organisation of work, exercise of creative functions controlled by critical functions, division of tasks within group work, self-management of the various stages, inferential processuality, direct use of technologies and languages. Finally, in order to ensure that these experiences emerge from purely recreational and instrumental logic for its own sake, the practical activity must be included in the wider didactic design, in conjunction with all the other disciplines.

For this reason, we propose in this paragraph a reflection on the educational meaning of "making videos" and an audiovisual production sheet useful for schools interested in using a teaching model focused on the principles to which reference was made in the previous paragraphs.

3.1 Educational meanings of "making" videos

Media production is welcomed by students who can represent their own enthusiasm and interests, using forms of expression close to them, but also by many educators because of the educational and social dimensions that emerge. The significance that media education attributes to such activities in the educational context can be traced back to three main instances (Rivoltella, 2017, pp. 108 – 110):

1. the cognitive function of doing because through the practical dimension students can learn knowledge;
2. cooperation as a learning opportunity to overcome the transmissive teaching model;
3. the educational function of language: the production of videos implies reflection on the languages implicit in production (media education).

The first instance refers to the experience of Célestin Freinet (1977; 1978), certainly still one of the compulsory reference points for media education. In his idea of school, of which typographical work is the core, *the activation* of students comes before any reflection or theoretical elaboration. It goes through three fundamental aspects: contextual visits, free reports of the students on what they could observe, printing operations that involve assembling everything in order to produce a class newspaper as the final result. But without a shadow of a doubt Dewey (1997) remains an essential point of reference concerning experience-related learning. As is well known, his concept of experience consists of the interaction between the subject and the object, it is a "transaction" between the subject and the environment; education therefore becomes the privileged area in which the transaction contributes to creating new spaces of freedom and change. Precisely for this reason, school must promote forms of practical, social and cultural activities so as to produce significant changes (changes in terms of learning). In fact, according to Dewey, experience is the key to learning, and teaching must focus on the possibilities and needs of each student. Media output can thus be interpreted in terms of action, experience from which learning follows. Didactically, these kinds of choices result in the moment of acquiring knowledge and putting it into practice being welded together: in the same way that you learn to read by writing (Rivoltella, 2017).

The second instance refers to overcoming transmissive teaching, typical of the frontal lesson, and gives way to a reorganisation in a cooperative sense of learning that turns the class into a creative laboratory. In a laboratory class, where the technologies and languages of the media are used by students to produce messages, the function of teachers is to be a director of the training situation aimed at reflecting on the didactic-productive process based on precise expected learning objectives (disciplinary, if any, and educational media).

The third aspect, which is linked to the previous one, highlights the focus on the constituent languages of the artifacts produced according to a semiological approach. In what way? Not according to a training process dominated by teaching and the subsequent application of audiovisual grammars and syntax where the rules are studied first and later applied. Here language is learned through a process that can foster/stimulate students' ability to ask questions about the process that is being carried out, to encourage reflection on the profound structures of the language device that is being used. Media reflection may concern, for example (Buckingham, 2003; 2020):

1. *Production:* who is communicating, why and with what interests, who are the owners of companies, from broadcasters to GAFA companies (Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple), to which voices do they give space?
2. *Language:* semiological approach to textual architecture, how to construct messages, how to construct meanings through the combination of audiovisual codes (the meaning of filming, editing, directing);
3. *The audience:* who uses the message, with what possibilities, what uses and meanings, how do you win over audiences through formats, for example? How do you sell your audience to advertising? How do GAFA companies behave today? How do they manage our data? How does the audience interpret the media? What has driven/is driving the transition from passive consumer to producer?
4. *Representation:* messages do not present reality but represent it. How do you construct messages to make them appear realistic? Why are some more realistic than others? What's the connection to the truth?

In addition, "making video" implies the division of tasks within collective and orchestrated work based on the achievement of precise objectives; communication skills, time management, accountability and the ability of individual group members to choose and make decisions are essential elements for such an activity, which is functional to didactic and educational processes. Thanks to this, according to the indications of Cappello (2008, pp. 16 – 17): "the opportunity is created (far from obvious, however) to establish innovative and more "playful" pedagogical models and educational pathways aimed at establishing a more direct confrontation with the emotional investments of minors and with their subjectivity, a comparison that is much more difficult and tortuous to achieve through critical analysis alone." Finally, it is important to emphasise that in school settings production should not be an end in itself, the instrumental and technical aspects are secondary to the development by students of expressive and communicative skills. The role of the teacher is to accompany productive experiences with a parallel path of reflection and self-evaluation of the whole process, so that the technical part leaves room for critical participation. This is in line with the most innovative trends in international experiences:

> "In a way, my idea is that we have to overcome text as the privileged focus of study in the classroom, something that media education has inherited from teaching literary subjects. It is not that we should abandon the activity of explaining text, but that it should simply be part of a broader understanding of the way the media operate. This implies that critical analysis must be accompanied by creative production, and that creative production may be a way of generating new and deeper critical observations" (Buckingham, 2003, p. 135).

3.2 The didactic-educational production model

There are several production models that are functional to making videos: the Anglo-Saxon technological model that refers to media studies (Rivoltella, 2001); the socio-cultural model (Schonten & Watling, 1997) that favours the relational dimension and looks at the individual and his/her problematic sphere, usable in the extracurricular world in art-therapy situations for example; the film-making model proposed by Galliani (1984a) and aimed at productive and critical reading activities in primary schools.

The model we propose indicates the general operating procedures (process steps and activities) used in the audiovisual production sector that may lead to the achievement of a number of objectives (*Table 1*): the development of professional and technical knowledge and skills, the development of linguistic knowledge and skills functional to media reading and writing, the development of aesthetic, creative and authoritative skills, the development of organisational and relational skills; the development of disciplinary knowledge related to the subject matter. Of course, it is necessary to consider how the indicated phases and activities may vary according to the audiovisual genre to be created (fictional short film, creative documentary, cartoon, educational video, animation-based video, news, TikTok or YouTube video etc.) and how the objectives may involve different levels (basic, intermediate, advanced, highly specialised). Therefore, this model must be considered flexible and be modified on the basis of a specific teaching plan, curated by the teacher.

Process steps	*Activities*	*Objectives*
Choice of topic or story	The group chooses the topic (a problem, a phenomenon, an occurrence, an experience deriving from reality) on which to make the video. A topic is a macro area that becomes the field of exploration and research for any domain of knowledge. The choice of topic to be covered must be subject to communicative urgency and the desire to communicate derives from the need to understand/interpret the world, to better explain an aspect of the reality surrounding us to ourselves and others.	**Knowledge** 1. Understanding how writing for a video project is different from writing for a written text (which we are used to) 2. Discriminating against an important aspect in relation to the knowledge domain in which it operates **Skills** 1. Ability to negotiate own ideas 2. Ability to finalise collective work toward a shared goal 3. Be able to evaluate ideas 4. Be able to support one's own ideas in a debate
Choose the audience	The type of audience (target audience) affects the production pathway. It is therefore a good idea to decide at the outset who you want to address. Audience choice also involves distribution (film, general TV, thematic TV, on-demand TV, web portals, etc.) and circulation (viral and social)	**Knowledge** 1. Understanding the relationship between media and the audience 2. Understanding how texts can reach a certain audience 3. Recognising the role of the audience in choosing the texts to be used 4. Understanding the role of social media in the circulation of knowledge
Research (and problematisation) phase	This identifies how much those involved already know about the chosen topic and what kind of contribution each of them can make to the production process as a whole. Knowledge of the subject is deepened through consultation of texts, videos, websites, articles, interviews, etc. Meetings with content experts may be organised. Problematisation takes place, i.e. the stage in which the group is urged to go beyond what they know and can do. A way to question clichés on the subject and find new stimuli to research.	**Skills** 1. Ability to conduct targeted research on the chosen theme 2. Ability to identify witnesses/content experts who can contribute to adding more in-depth knowledge of the subject 3. Ability to identify witnesses/content experts who can be interviewed 4. Being able to manage sources from a regulatory perspective. 5. Being critical of what you is being researched (knowing how to problematize) 6. Navigating, searching and filtering digital data, information and contents (DigComp 2.2) 7. Evaluating digital data, information and contents (DigComp 2.2) 8. Handling digital data, information and contents (DigComp 2.2)
Site surveys	The site survey indicates the activity of searching for places that could be chosen for setting and shooting the project. The identified environments (locations) must be technically and creatively suitable.	**Knowledge** 1. Recognising the characteristics of an environment **Skills** 2. Assessing the narrative relevance of a location
Writing the idea	Based on the results of the research, the scope is defined by describing in a few lines what the final result of the video will be: what it wants to relate and how. It must be written in such a way that the reader (a customer, a producer, an employer) can "pre-see" the final result.	**Skills** 1. Using creative writing techniques 2. Writing a text in relation to the next audiovisual representation
Writing the subject (and the story)	The discussion helps, on the one hand, to define the exact contents of the story/topic and, on the other, to articulate the ways of recounting (duration, directing style, indication of places, reference targets). It is a normal didactic operation because verbal and written language is used, but the known language must be directed to "show"' what is written on paper.	**Knowledge** 1. Understanding how writing for a video project is different from writing for a written text **Skills** 1. Applying creative writing techniques 2. Being able to write for a subsequent audiovisual representation of the written text 3. Being able to express and share ideas 4. Ability to finalise collective work toward a shared choice
Writing the outline	In the outline, the main events of the audiovisual work (history, succession of events) must be indicated point by point in chronological order. This provides a schematic way to prefigure the development line for the film, documentary, cartoon etc.	**Skills** 1. Applying creative writing techniques 2. Being able to write for a subsequent audiovisual representation of the written text

Writing the script	The script contains all the information necessary for filming: the articulation of the story or theme, the dialogue, the text of the narrator, the actions of the characters, the characteristics of the characters, the images (photographs, drawings, written texts, paintings, etc.), fixed or animated graphics, music, noise, scene and location indications, technical features (need for special effects, complex synthetic images). The script must be written in the knowledge that the language written on paper must be transformed into an audio-visual narrative; it must not be abstract but "cinematic" and must allow to the finished work to be pre-seen. Finally, it must be written in technical-specialist language so that it can be read in the same way by all those taking part in the work (crew).	**Knowledge** 1. Knowing the difference between visual language and verbal language **Skills** 1. Being able to write according to specific models of screenplays (e.g. documentary, news, etc.) 2. Managing the space and time elements, dialogues, music and lyrics that give meaning to the script 3. Applying creative writing techniques 4. Being able to write a text for a video 5. Being able to use multimedia language (verbal, musical, visual) in a complementary way
Storyboard design	The storyboard is the graphic representation of the script, allowing you to accurately visualise all the frames envisaged by the project: the subject or subjects shot, the documentary situation shot, point of view and angle, type of plane and field, any machine movements. Depending on the audiovisual genres, the accuracy of the way in which the scenes envisaged in the project are graphically represented changes.	**Knowledge** 1. Knowing how to sort sequences according to editing rules **Skills** 1. Being able to apply the communication rules of audiovisual language 2. Being able to represent according to the different types of shots and positions of the camera
Stage requirements and organisation of shooting	Breaking down the script. On the basis of the reading of the script, it is necessary to identify everything necessary for filming, the places for filming, requesting the necessary authorisations and estimating the shooting times.	**Knowledge** 1. Knowing how to build a road map 2. Knowing how to comply with objectives **Skills** 1. Being able to organise work times
The production phases (filming)	Filming involves the application of certain rules (basic elements of audiovisual language) but at the same time must allow creative and expressive freedom. This operational step involves the use of precise instruments: for shooting, recording sound, taking special shots (e.g. carts or drones), illuminating scenes. It is therefore a communicative operation aimed at applying the principles of direction, on the one hand, and the use of technical tools on the other.	**Knowledge** 1. Knowing how to relate to the artistic personnel (actors if any) and any people interviewed/witnesses 2. Knowing how to use a video shooting tool: video camera, photo camera, smartphone 3. Knowing how to use a sound recording instrument: microphone **Skills** 1. Applying the principles of visual representation 2. Applying visual composition techniques 3. Applying the principles of audiovisual direction 4. Being able to construct a frame based on the communicative project 5. Being able to coordinate a group of people 6. Using digital technologies creatively (DigComp2.2)
Analysis of footage	The discussion must be about the effectiveness of the audiovisual construction process, compared with what had been anticipated in previous steps. It is a question of whether significant material has been created through the specific use of codes and signs.	**Skills** 1. Being able to assess the communicative effectiveness of the created shots
Editing	The editing operation consists of the combination of images (real or reconstructed), graphic signs (writing, drawings, computer-processed images), sounds (music, speech, sound effects). This is a particularly creative moment, the combination of images and sounds can give rise to the most unpredictable results. Editing is, on the one hand, a technical operation, the juxtaposition of images and sounds through software, and, on the other, an expressive operation, the juxtaposition of images and sounds according to a precise application of the directing principles.	**Knowledge** 1. Understanding how to combine visual and audible codes 2. Understanding the concept of representation 3. Knowing how to distinguish reality from representation 4. Understanding Copyright and Licensing issues (DigComo 2.0) **Skills** 1. Being able to apply basic editing rules 2. Being able to apply the rules of the direction 3. Using editing software 4. Using digital technologies creatively (DigComp2.2)
Distribution, circulation, socialisation	This is a particularly significant step as it allows, on the one hand, the participants to rewarded in the educational project and, on the other, a process of socialisation to be created within the school and outside, in the local area.	**Knowledge** 1. Knowing the rights and duties, dangers and benefits of posting videos online 2. Knowing the characteristics and expectations of the target audience 3. Knowing how to distinguish the features of intimate and private spaces **Skills** 1. Being able to organise a public screening 2. Managing possible online circulation channels, based on the target audience 3. Being able to manage forums and internet comments on the video 4. Identifying the characteristics of social media communication 5. Choosing simple digital technologies for interaction, and identifying suitable simple means of communication for a given context (DigComp 2.2) 6. Interacting and collaborating through digital technologies (DigComp 2.2) 7. Exercising citizenship through digital technologies (DigComp 2.2)
Reviewing and evaluating the product and course	The evaluation has two directions: the internal one, whose analysis model is the purpose of the video and the relational dynamics; the external one, which collects the indications of the audience about the understanding of the message.	**Knowledge** 1. Developing awareness of the importance of audiovisual reading **Skills** 1. Being able to evaluate the video against the proposed objectives 2. Being able to assess the knowledge gained by the participants in the experience in relation to the video content 3. Being able to assess the average educational skills achieved 4. Being able to assess the technological skills developed

Table 1. The educational video-productive model.

4. Conclusions

The proposed model characterised by productive activities linked to the learning of specific knowledge and skills and characterised by continuous reflection promotes active and participatory teaching practices. From this perspective, video production becomes a privileged tool for innovating teaching: (a) the transmissive model is no longer central, leaving space for reorganisation in a cooperative and collaborative sense of learning; and (b) technologies are deployed in terms of the changes they can trigger in the dynamic educational environment that invites students to experiment, explore, make mistakes, and transform teachers and educators into laboratory guides. Finally, the centrality attributed to the development of skills through a pathway based on problem solving tends to bring teaching methodology closer to professional experiences; problem solving helps students face the challenges posed by the world, to make decisions, to work in groups and to develop communication, collaborative and creative skills and critical thinking.

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