



Project Number 142299-LLP-1-2008-1-IT-COMENIUS-CMP

Report on teachers' workshops for case studies evaluation

Italian Report



Part I – Research and Collection

Five people participated in the process of collecting case studies: three researchers (two of which with a minor role) and two undergraduate students. The main sources to get in touch with teachers having relevant experiences in Media Education were:

- academic and professional associations such as MED;
- free online searching by introducing words such as “media and school” or “journal and school” or “blog and school” and so on;
- specialized web site about Media education or projects about Media education (both found thanks to the free searching online);
- personal contacts due to previous experience in the field of media education.

In general, researchers and undergraduate students asked teachers to fill in the form autonomously, but this was not always possible. For the most part of the case studies, the forms have been filled in by the staff. Teachers were contacted by mail, then they sent a lot of unstructured contents such as projects, attachments, worked examples to derive information to describe the experience. Teachers were always available to provide integrative information or to specify unclear topics. When the information sent was not enough to appropriately fill in the form, a questionnaire with open questions has been administered via email. The answers have been adapted and inserted into the form. In some cases, the staff has even met up with the teacher to get further information or to verify the content of the form.

The main difficulties encountered in the collection of case studies were:

- finding practices in Media Education: even though there are a lot of web sites on the Internet dedicated to media education, the most part of them are not working or updated. Thus it becomes difficult to identify possible sources unless you have personal contacts;
- getting rich and significant information: generally speaking, teachers provided scarce documentation. Only few teachers had detailed project plans and this entailed that the staff had to ask specific questions on the project;

The most part of teachers contacted for this WP were available to contribute in the project. When they refused, this was for lack of time. Actually, the long form resulted very demanding and as a first feedback we got some refusals.

Overall teachers found the form clear and well structured with some exceptions, especially in the section “Detailed description of the experience/project”. They found difficult to understand the meaning of the following items: “Outcomes of the project/experience”; “Lessons learnt”; “Assessment/Evaluation System and Tools”; “Transferability”; and “What's next?”. Indeed, once the meaning of the items was clarified, they felt confused because they never consider issues such as “Transferability”, just to give an example.

Part II – Synthesis and First Results

MED collected 35 long case studies and 25 short case studies for a total amount of 60 case studies. The tables below show some trends about media used, skills covered, media issues and the most common subject areas involved with media education.

1. Media used

As emerges from Table n. 1, digital media such as computer and Internet are the most common media used in the documented practices, but television still maintains an high position. Computer is the most common media with 36%, then the Internet follows with 17% and on the third position Television with 12%. There are not so many practices devoted to the most recent tools of the web such as wiki, or Youtube or Facebook and so on. Tools 2.0 are still underestimated.

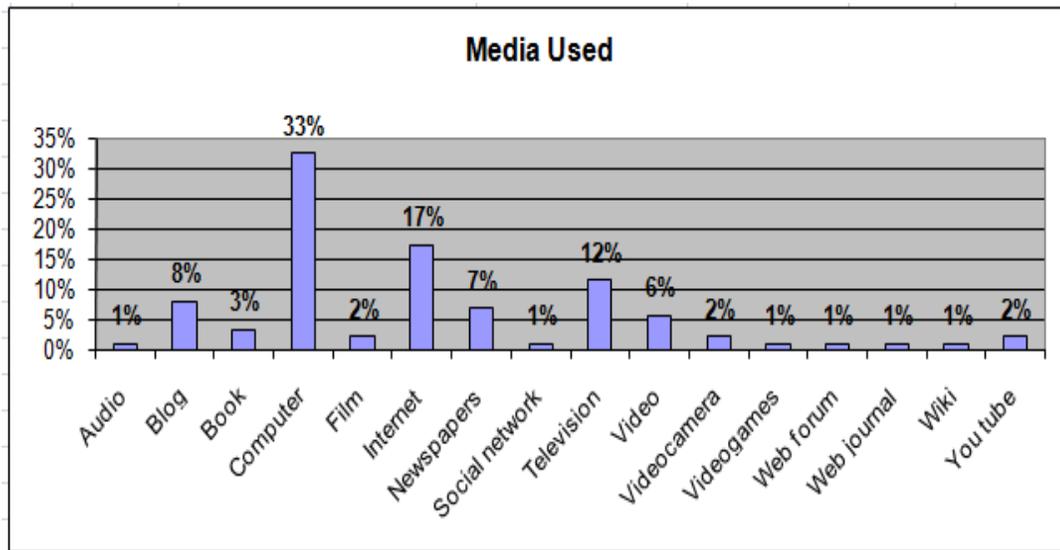


Table n. 1 – Media used

2. Media skills

As regards media skills, Table n. 2 shows that 36% of projects and experiences focus on writing skills, while the less common media skills considered are the users skills with 18%. Critical thinking and reading skills get a similar consideration. One could ask why reading skills are so common into media education projects at schools. A possible reason could be that writing skills still remain a key competence to be developed at school. Thus, learning experiences which have to do with this competence may find a better integration into the curriculum.

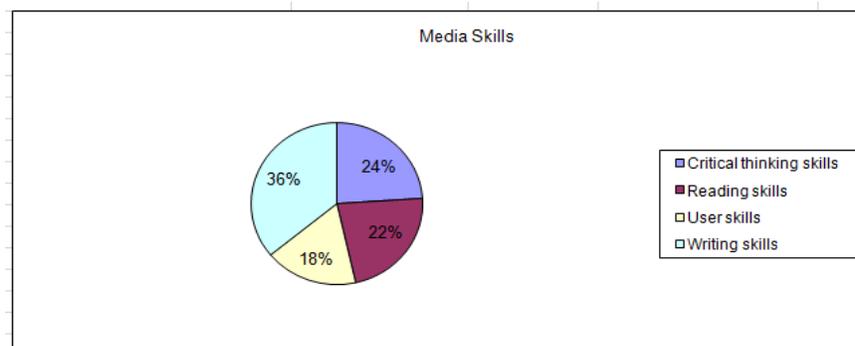


Table n. 2 – Media skills

3. Media issues

The most evident result is that a great part (46%) of the media education experiences regard the production and creation of a media. This emphasis on creation is a quite recent evolution of Media Education. As well known, up to some decades ago, critical comprehension and analysis were more stressed than production. Nowadays it seem that the creative component of Media Education has reached its maturity. Topics related to citizenship such as politics and democracy received a fairly good attention with 16% of the experiences devoted to these issues, and Visual literacy appears as an emerging topic with 11%. Besides that, it has to be noted that not always the focus on the media issues was clear. Some experiences were more related to teaching with media than teaching media. In so far as this confusion remains, it is difficult to specify what media issues were at stake.

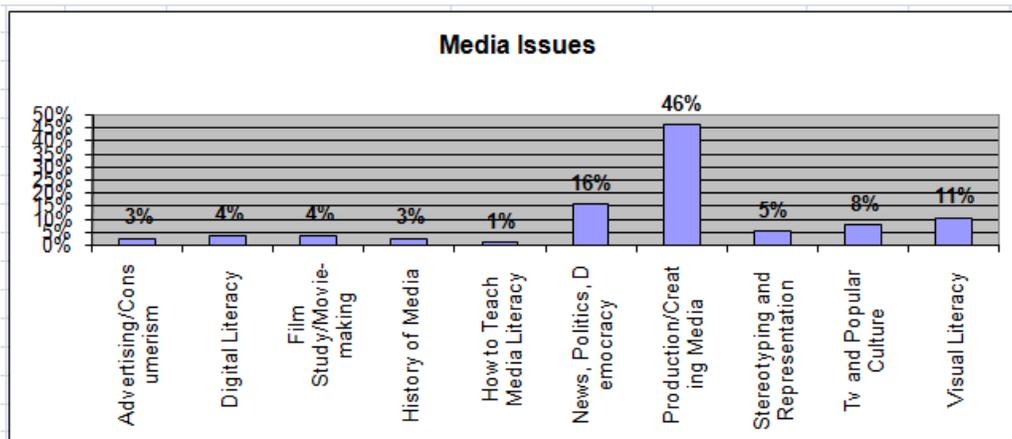


Table n. 3 – Media issues

4. Subject Area

The most part of the collected experiences were carried out within the courses of Literacy (31%), followed by Computer Literacy (20%) and Arts (13%). These results are not surprising. On one side, the emphasis on writing skills is naturally connected with this trend. On the other side, it is still widely common the idea that media literacy has to do with computer and ICT.

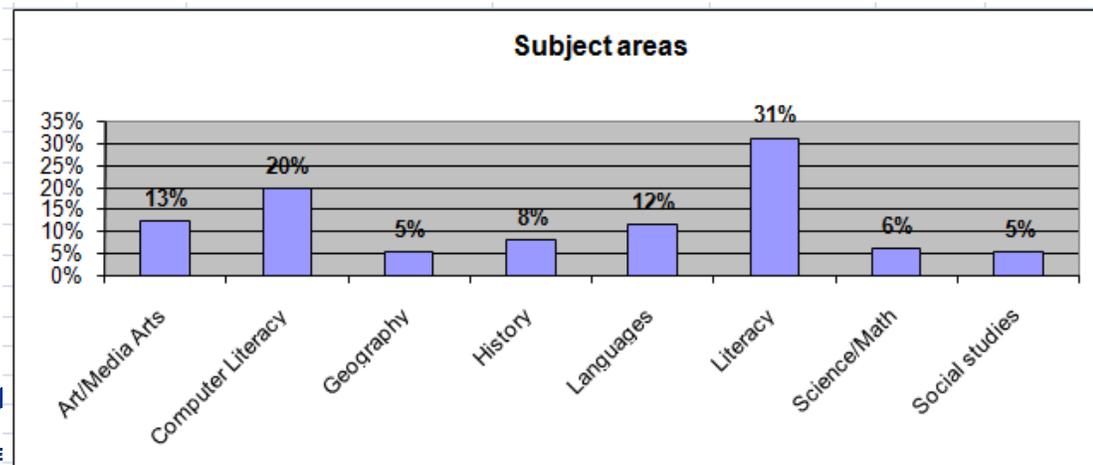


Table n. 4 – Subject Areas

4. Global impressions about the case studies collected

Media education is more and more common in the Italian school, but a lot of work has still to be done. Very often teachers do not have a clear idea about the distinction between learning about media and learning with media, so they confuse computer literacy with media literacy or even media literacy with teaching through ICT. Moreover, the lack of technical tools or abilities still obstruct the development of projects about or with media. Teachers are not encouraged to engage themselves into innovation and media remain an alien object of their professional experience.

Lastly, even though teachers were available to share their own experience, they are not used to document their activities and this was sometimes really surprising.

Part III – Evaluation and Final Results

1. Date and site of the meetings

First meeting: 15th February 2010, University of Florence, Florence, Italy

Second meeting: 23th February 2010, University of Turin, Asti, Italy

2. Number of teachers

First meeting: 18

Second meeting: 12

3. Number of case studies considered

35 long case studies

25 shot case studies

4. Procedures and results (i.e. a synthesis of the scores obtained by the case studies examined per each indicator)

First meeting

Two weeks before the workshop, a meeting was organised to introduce the OnAir project to the Teachers' Advisors working at the Faculty of Education of the University of Florence. During the meeting, the advisors were asked to contribute in the process of analysing and evaluating the case studies in media education. About 15 people accepted to contribute, so they were involved in the process. Ten days before the workshop, they received via email two case studies each and the relative attachments in order to allow them to individually analyse all the materials.

During the workshop, participants were first asked to illustrate their general feelings about the case studies analysed, then in small groups they discussed about each case studies and filled in the Case Evaluation Form (One for each case studies).

At the end of the workshop one hour was dedicated to debate about the usefulness of documenting practices and on general weakness and strengthness of the collected practices (see below).

Second meeting

The second meeting was not preceded by an online pre-work. Teachers involved worked directly in small groups discussion about each case studies and filling in the Case Evaluation Form (One for each case studies).

At the end of the workshop a questionnaire about the usefulness of documenting practices and on general weakness and strenghtness of the collected practices was administered (see below).

Best 5 long case studies as identified by evaluators:

1. The Historical Journal – Asti 1861, Patrizia Vayola & Carla Cavallotto, Asti;
2. Let's learn from volunteers, Liana Peria, Isola d'Elba;
3. Chocolat 3.B, Luca Piergiovanni, Como;
4. English with Seurat, Francesca Panzica, Lastra a Signa, Firenze;
5. From digital naïf to (partially) critical surfers on the Net, Marco Guastavigna, Cuneo

5. Criticalities emerged during the evaluation phase and adopted solutions

As regards the general climate characterizing the workshops, the evaluators were collaborative and very interested in such a type of work.

6. Global feelings given by the evaluators about 1) the general quality level of the practices examined; and 2) the usefulness of documenting teaching practices.

- Opinions about documenting practices
Almost all the evaluators agree that documenting, analysing, evaluating and disseminating teaching practices, especially in new domains such as those ones based on the use of media, is fundamental. Teachers are not used to capitalize their own knowledge for lack of time, but they should have to do it both to share knowledge with colleagues and reflect on their own practices in order to improve them.
- Opinions about the strenghtness of the practices analysed
Some recurrent strenghtnesses were:
 - Relevance of learning aims and purposes, often related to social life, citizenship and so on;
 - Original and innovative ideas;
 - Emphasis on learning by doing, cooperative learning and critical thinking.
- Opinions about the weakness of the practices analysed
Some recurrent weaknesses were:
 - Learning objectives not clearly defined: they were often indicated in general and ambiguous terms;
 - Low attention to document the learning process;
 - Low emphasis on evaluation;
 - Level of students' participation not always clear (one recurrent question was: "Are you sure that the product has been really realized by the students?").
- Opinions about the evaluation process
One recurrent issue was the lack of information about some items, especially about Documentation and Assessment. Unluckily the staff could not solve this problem as the lack of information was structural to the process.
Another issue was the time they had to evaluate case studies. They asked more time for the future.