

AN APPROACH FOR INTEGRATING MEDIA EDUCATION  
INTO EVERYDAY SCHOOL-LIFE AND INSTRUCTION  
AT SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL

*Un enfoque para integrar la educación en medios, en la  
instrucción y en el día a día de la escuela secundaria*

*Une approche pour intégrer l'éducation aux médias,  
à l'instruction et au jour le jour dans l'enseignement  
secondaire*

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Recibido: 07/01/2011; Aceptado: 09/02/2011; Publicado: 01/06/2011

BIBLID [0212-5374 (2011) 29, 1; 181-190]

Ref. Bibl. DIETER SPANHEL. An approach for integrating media education into everyday school-life and instruction at secondary school level. *Enseñanza & Teaching*, 29, 1-2011, 181-190.

RESUMEN: La aparición de los nuevos medios de comunicación supone un reto para la educación escolar, pues obliga a redefinir sus objetivos y resultados. Ya no es suficiente el hecho de transmitir el conocimiento y ayudar a los jóvenes en formación a adquirir determinadas competencias. Los estudiantes deben aprender, además, a enfrentarse en el futuro a problemas desconocidos, con incertidumbre e inseguridad, con la creciente disponibilidad de información, a la evolución del conocimiento y a lo desconocido. Por ello, la educación escolar debe ayudar a los alumnos a construir estructuras flexibles de pensamiento operativo y de orientación, marcos

conceptuales abstractos, fantasía y creatividad, así como a adquirir la capacidad de aprender a aprender, a reorganizar las estructuras del aprendizaje y conocimientos y a desarrollar la habilidad del aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida.

En este contexto, los medios en los centros escolares ejercen dos funciones fundamentales: a la vez que actúan por sí solos como objeto de estudio, son instrumentos de enseñanza-aprendizaje, y ayudan a los estudiantes a adquirir las competencias en los medios. Nuestra aproximación a la *educación integrada en los medios* en las escuelas de educación secundaria se caracteriza por lo siguiente: debe incluir todo tipo de medios, debe involucrar a todo el profesorado y abarcar todos los temas de estudio (lecciones). No debería hacerse ya la distinción entre la educación de medios y alfabetización informática, pues ésta debe formar parte integral del progresivo proceso de digitalización de la enseñanza. Los diferentes medios, con sus capacidades específicas, deberían utilizarse con naturalidad como una forma de mejorar la enseñanza y el aprendizaje, como herramientas para la resolución de problemas y tareas, y como instrumentos de comunicación y autorreflexión de documentación, formación, expresión y publicidad.

Llevar a cabo una educación de medios sostenible se enfrenta a dos dificultades. Por un lado, la mayor parte del profesorado no está adecuadamente entrenado para utilizar los medios en educación de forma eficaz y temen enfrentarse a ello. Por otra parte, la educación con medios requiere modelos de enseñanza abiertos y diversos métodos de instrucción, así como instalaciones específicas de medios con acceso fácil, a cualquier hora del día y en cualquier momento.

*Palabras clave:* integración, educación medial, instrucción, enseñanza secundaria.

**SUMMARY:** The new media as a challenge for school education require to redefine its aims and methods. It is no longer sufficient to transmit knowledge and help young people to build up special competences. In addition and primarily they must learn to deal with unknown problems in the future, with uncertainty and insecurity, with an increasing lot of information, changing knowledge and truth and with the unknown. Therefore school must help students to build up flexible structures of operational thinking and orientation, abstract conceptual frames, phantasy and creativity and acquire the capability of learning to learn, to reorganize learning structures and knowledge and the ability for lifelong learning.

Within this context media in schools have two fundamental functions: they are instruments of teaching-learning-processes as well as subject matter helping students to acquire media competence. Our approach to *integrated media education* for secondary schools can be characterized as follows: It should imply all sorts of media, it should involve all teachers and embrace all subject matters (lessons). There should no longer be made a distinction between media education and computer literacy because of the integration of all media on the basis of ongoing digitalization. The different media with their specific capacities should be used naturally as a means of improving teaching and learning, as tools for problem-solving and coping with tasks, and as instruments of communication and self-reflexion, of documentation and formation, of expression and publicity. The realization of a sustainable media education is confronted with two difficulties: 1. Most teachers mostly are not trained for media education and they fear the great burden of this task. 2. Media education

requires open forms and varying methods of instruction and specific media facilities must be at hand at any time and everywhere.

*Key words:* integrating, media education, instruction, secondary school.

**RÉSUMÉ:** L'apparition des nouveaux moyens de communication suppose un défi pour l'éducation scolaire car elle oblige à redéfinir ses objectifs et ses résultats. Le fait de transmettre des connaissances et d'aider les jeunes en formation à acquérir des compétences déterminées ne suffit plus. Les étudiants doivent apprendre, de plus, à faire face, à l'avenir, à des problèmes inconnus, avec de l'incertitude et de l'insécurité, avec une disponibilité d'information croissante, à l'évolution de la connaissance et de l'inconnu. C'est pour cette raison que l'éducation scolaire doit aider les élèves à construire des structures flexibles de pensée opérationnelle et d'orientation, des cadres conceptuels abstraits, la fantaisie et la créativité, ainsi qu'acquérir la capacité d'apprendre à apprendre, à réorganiser les structures de l'apprentissage et des connaissances. Et à développer l'habileté de l'apprentissage tout le long de la vie.

Dans ce contexte, les médias dans les centres scolaires exercent deux fonctions fondamentales: ils agissent, à la fois, par eux-mêmes, comme un objet d'étude, ce sont des instruments d'enseignement-apprentissage et ils aident les étudiants à acquérir les compétences des médias. Notre approche de l'éducation intégrée aux médias dans les écoles d'enseignement secondaire est caractérisée par les faits suivants.

Elle doit inclure tous les genres de médias, elle doit impliquer tout le professorat et embrasser tous les sujets d'étude. Il ne convient plus de faire la distinction entre l'éducation aux médias et l'alphabétisation informatique car cette dernière doit faire partie intégrante du progressif processus de digitalisation de l'enseignement. Les divers médias, avec leurs capacités spécifiques, devraient être employés naturellement comme une façon d'améliorer l'enseignement et l'apprentissage, comme des outils pour la résolution de problèmes et de tâches et comme des instruments de communication et d'autoréflexion, de documentation, de formation, d'expression et de publicité.

Mener à terme une éducation aux médias soutenable est une tâche qui rencontre deux difficultés. D'un côté, la plus grande partie du professorat n'est pas convenablement entraînée pour utiliser les médias dans l'éducation d'une manière efficace et elle craint d'y faire face. D'un autre côté, l'éducation aux médias requiert des modèles d'enseignement ouverts et diverses méthodes d'instruction ainsi que des installations spécifiques de moyens facilement accessibles, à toute heure et à tout moment.

*Mots clés:* intégration, éducation aux médias, instruction, enseignement secondaire.

Our approach tries to overcome these difficulties in the following way:

1. At each grade school work focuses on only one medium. Thus teachers' work concentrates on only a few media and it provides students with a systematic construction of media competence. The subject-matter-aims of all subjects are thus combined with aims of media education.

2. At each grade suitable themes from different subjects are selected and combined and greater units of instruction are planned, realized and evaluated in the form of team-teaching. Besides, special topics of media education are integrated into the different subjects (e.g. language, social studies, arts or music) as special lessons. In this way there could be constructed an integrated curriculum of media education which is closely connected with the normal curriculum of the school.
3. An important part of integrated media education is the meaningful use of traditional and electronic media (multimedia, e-mail and Internet) at many occasions not only during the lessons but also as an enrichment for school-life (open school for parents, exhibitions, performances, sport events, etc.).
4. In addition the use of computers as a universal tool, the advancement of language –reading– and communication-competence and the training of special methods of working for the different media must be practiced regularly at all grades.

The basis for successful media education in this sense is a consistent in-service teacher-training, the readiness and ability of teachers for cooperation and open methods of instruction, the headmaster's support of suitable organisational structures (e.g. a media laboratory). In the long run integrated media education could be guaranteed by developing a special school profile.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The new media as a challenge for school education require to redefine its aims and methods. It is no longer sufficient to transmit knowledge and help young people to build up special competences. In addition and primarily they must learn to deal with unknown problems in the future, with uncertainty and insecurity, with an increasing lot of information, with changing knowledge and truth and with the unknown.

Therefore school must help students to acquire the capability of learning to learn and the readiness for lifelong learning and to reorganize learning structures and knowledge.

This involves a greater personal responsibility of the adolescents for their learning and their own development. It is therefore important that school with its task to educate offers orientation for adolescents in the variety of apparently arbitrary ways of life. School must help its students to build up a stable system of values and structures of orientation and to develop the ability to act responsibly.

In serving these tasks media education and information techniques at school are gaining more importance. On the one hand they must be used as instruments for improving teaching and learning processes. On the other hand they are becoming a subject matter. In any case media competence is becoming an important

educational aim. In order to do justice to the significance and to these functions of the media we have developed our model of integrated media education.

This approach is the result of a four-year model experiment at a secondary modern school in Erlangen in collaboration with the whole staff of the school.

## 2. WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF INTEGRATED MEDIA EDUCATION?

Our approach to media education at school can be characterised by the following demands on all teachers:

- *The students' extra-curricular media experience*, their media-conveyed knowledge, abilities, emotions and values, psychic conflicts, learning and behavioural disturbances should be integrated into lessons and school-life.
- The *various media* with their specific capacities *should be used naturally* as a means of coping with teaching, educational or professional problems and tasks, that is they should be instruments of expression, representation, information, learning, working and communication for students and teachers.
- *All sorts of media* should be involved without pedagogical reservation. So books are not from the outset to be seen as more valuable than videos or computer games; it depends on the contents and on the aims that are to be gained by the use of the media. Because of the developments in the field of multimedia this aspect implies the integration of media education, computer literacy and multimedial techniques.
- Accordingly *media didactics* –that is the use of media as a means of learning and working for the improvement of teaching and learning processes and *media education*, –that is the use of media as a subject matter with the aim of enabling students to critically, reflectively and responsibly deal with media in all areas of life –must be fused.
- Media education is to be *integrated into the general context of education* at school, which must not be understood as a mere summing up of single educational tasks. The medial aspect must be taken into account with all educational problems, for example as an important part of leisure time education. From this point of view, lively and stimulating lessons in Arts, Music or Physical Education appear as an important part of an integrated media education.  
On the other hand we imply important possibilities for social and ethical education when we are practising special methods of media education.
- *Every teacher is responsible* for integrated media education; it must neither be limited to a particular subject with its own specifically trained teacher nor to certain links in the contents of single subjects (such as German or History, Social Studies or Geography). It includes cross-curriculum projects, school events, methods of co-operating as well as activities going beyond the school boundaries.

- Assuming a *broadened concept of text* in the context of media, thus including not only printed or written texts, but also all complex symbolic forms of description, German lessons could become an important focal point of integrated media education. The central idea might be to convey a «media literacy».

### 3. WHAT ARE THE AIMS AND TASKS?

In our modern society we must not entrust school with ever new additional tasks. The aim of our approach therefore is to integrate media education into lessons and school-life in such a way that they can be combined and realised together with the usual curricular requirements and the other educational aims. Thus additional strain should be avoided; over and above that, an improvement of learning processes could be achieved. The aim is to convey media competence. Students should be enabled to act properly, with self-determination, creatively and socially responsibly in a world dominated by media and information technologies. In this context it is important that the use, lay-out, analysis and criticism of the media at school are balanced properly.

During the model experiment we tried –in cooperation with the whole staff to find out practicable ways how to deal with the following tasks of integrated media education:

- The teachers knowledge of their students' media world and their dealing with media outside school must be as accurate as possible. The general results of media research are not sufficient here. Because of that we have developed short questionnaires to register and comprehend the students' leisure time and media behaviour. They are available on CD-ROM together with routines for analysis so that forms can analyse and reflect their use of media behaviour together.
- Teachers must appreciate and attend sensitively the students' dealing with media in their everyday life. They should offer their students the possibility to express their knowledge and experience and to talk about their media habits, preferences and heroes. The drawing of comics, taking pictures or creating layouts at the computer can stimulate processes of reflection.
- Media education means didactic integration. When dealing with media in their leisure time, students gain a lot of unstructured and arbitrary information and pieces of knowledge, abilities and attitudes. Teachers must try to take up this extra-curricular experience and existing questions and to connect them with the subject-matters in order to motivate the students for the lessons and to make use of their energy and productivity for learning processes at school.
- Students must not be left alone with the flood of information from the new media. They need criteria for selection that are clearly oriented at values.

Their knowledge and experiences with the media must be talked about and consolidated and also be structured according to the subjects. Only then can they build up a structured basic knowledge that can later serve them as a frame of reference for life-long learning.

- With regard to media competence we are faced with the following tasks: the selection and meaningful use of different media; the creation and distribution of one's own media contributions; the understanding and evaluation of media creations; the recognition and analysis of media influence; the comprehension and evaluation of the conditions of media production and media distribution within modern society.

#### 4. THE STRUCTURE OF OUR APPROACH AND ITS REALIZATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

These are the results of the model experiment, the results of collaboration of university and the school.

The heart of our approach is a special curriculum for media education that is integrated into the usual curriculum for schools. This forms the frame of reference as regards education and contents.

The *vertical structure of the curriculum* of media education is determined by the idea of model media. At each grade work focuses on one medium only, without excluding the use of the other media. The sequence of the media is oriented on the sign systems on which the media at each grade are based on.

This procedure involves some advantages for teachers and students:

- First of all teachers have to acquire media education competence. This is more likely if they can concentrate to work with one media only during a year. This makes it easier to support the learning process by in-service-training sequences.
- During one year teachers and student become familiar to using these special media for learning processes and problem solving, to learn their language and to deal with the special techniques of media production.
- The focus on only one media at each grade allows students deeper insights into the functioning of these media within different contexts and improve the possibilities to acquire media competence.
- Last not least this helps the students over the years to systematically build up a media competence, taking into account all sorts of media. The sequence of the media:

5<sup>th</sup> grade: pictures (photographs, slides, drawings, comics, prints)

6<sup>th</sup> grade: audiovisual media (films, videos, TV)

7<sup>th</sup> grade: audio media (radio, cassettes, CD)

8<sup>th</sup> grade: print media (newspapers, magazines)

9<sup>th</sup> grade: multimedia (CD-ROM, Internet, e-mail)

Experience gained in the model experiment has shown that these model media must be complemented by two continuous working principles:

- The advancement of language, reading and communication competence must be an important part of the media education at all grades.
- In addition the use of the computer as a universal tool for learning and working must be integrated into every-day teaching at all grades. In each classroom there should therefore be at least one multimedia computer at hand to the free use by teachers and students.

The *horizontal structure of the curriculum* is characterised by the different forms of integrated media education and information technologies into teaching and school life. On the *level of teaching* we distinguish the following forms of integration:

- A close connection between the learning goals of the subjects with media educational aims in particular lessons (e.g. in German: the language of comics, the language of adverts; in Social Studies: analysis of videos showing violence and the development of non-violent strategies to solve conflicts).
- Links for the implementation of media educational topics in particular subjects (e.g. analysis and comparison of formal modes of presentation in the media in Arts lessons).
- Cross-curriculum units (e.g. the production of an radio magazine dealing with a historic topic in co-operation with the subjects History, German or Music).

Forms of integration on the *level of the school*:

- Media specific teams should be offered (photography, school radio, computer sciences); training students as specialists for working with media.
- School life: decoration of the school building (exhibitions of particular forms, wall news-sheets); parties; contacts to the parents.
- Activities going beyond school boundaries: contacts with other classes and schools via e-mail, co-operation with local media suppliers (libraries, newspaper, local radio, computer clubs).

It is furthermore particularly important that the students are continuously introduced to media specific techniques (techniques of analysis and production). Chances to practice and consolidate these techniques are daily to be found (e.g. the use of the computer for creative writing in German lessons).

As far as the contents are concerned the curriculum at each grade consists of three so-called *project frames*. These are larger units that, in dealing with a generic topic, link learning goals of the subjects with media educational objectives.



German forms the focal point of one of the project frames respectively. An example: a project frame for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade (audio media) is: «Young people and the law». Social Studies can gain its teaching objectives if the students record interviews with representatives of the juvenile court, the police, the youth welfare department. In the model experiment a radio feature with the topic «theft at department stores» was produced. Special connections ensue with the subjects German and Music. Relations to History or Geography are also possible (kids in a certain historical era or in developing countries).

The curriculum for media education is meant to make teachers' preparatory and planning work easier. At the beginning of the school year they shall fit the project frames into the plans for the subjects of the current term. In doing this they can follow their own ideas; the curriculum offers stimulation and help.

By this it should be guaranteed that media education and the use of new media occur continuously throughout the year. Special highlights in the school year are project days or weeks. They connect many forms of integration and present the time to get deeply involved in the media work and are well received by students and teachers.

##### 5. EFFECTS OF THE INTEGRATED APPROACH AND CONDITIONS FOR ITS REALIZATION

Within the framework of the model the following positive effects of an integrated media education and the continuous use of new media were to be observed:

With regard to the *students*:

- they arouse the students' interest and offer links to their everyday world; they enhance their motivation, their willingness to learn and to work, their perseverance and concentration;
- they lay bare concealed capabilities of the students, inspire their fantasy, and stimulate independent learning and working;
- they create a great variety of talking occasions and help to improve the students' language and media competence;
- they can instigate processes of self-reflection with the students and can improve their self-esteem in successful media projects.

With regard to the *teachers*:

- They can break up rigid teaching routines and challenge the teachers to vary methods, social and working forms more often;
- they suggest acting and project-oriented teaching forms;
- they ease up the teacher-student-relation;
- they can support educational efforts and, at times, reduce disciplinary problems.

With regard to the *school*:

- They instigate the dialogue among staff and a critical analysis of the school's work;
- they can enrich school-life and open the school for the outside world;
- they can open up new communication forms and partners for classes;
- they can arouse the parents' interest for the school's work anew.

We must not conceal that the realization of this integrated model makes great demands on the headmaster, staff and individual teachers. A promising realization seems only possible if the following *preconditions* are met:

- Headmaster/mistress and staff must deliberately decide to make integrated media education and the use of new media an important task of their school.
- The headmaster must support this matter by providing the necessary media and flexible organizational structures.
- The school must develop a concept for a suitable media organisation and must set up a media workshop.
- The basis is a consistent teacher training with respect to media education and their readiness for co-operation. It is important that the teachers have a positive pedagogical attitude towards the media, overview the media supply, know about the students' media world, recognise the pedagogical and didactic possibilities of the media and master the media specific techniques.

In the long run integrated media education as a central matter of concern will be guaranteed only within the framework of school development, by developing a special school profile and media education as an integrated part of it.

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