

Paris Agenda

or

12 Recommendations for Media Education

Paris, UNESCO, 21-22 June 2007

25 years after the adoption of the Grünwald Declaration that paved the way for media education at the international level, experts, education policy-makers, teachers and researchers, NGO representatives and media professionals from all the regions of the world met in Paris, on 21-22 June 2007. In a cooperative framework gathering all the stakeholders, this joint initiative of the French Commission for UNESCO and UNESCO, supported by the Council of Europe and the French Education Ministry, aimed at taking stock of the progress made and the obstacles met in developing media education through the implementation of education policies or practical experiences; it also intended to formulate recommendations meant to scale up media education and to mobilize all the stakeholders.

The participants reaffirmed the relevance of the Grünwald Declaration. The statements made in 1982 have an increased acuteness with the advent of the information society and knowledge sharing in a globalized context. The place and role of media have strengthened in our societies. More than ever citizens need to have a critical analysis of information whatever the symbolic system used (image, sound, text), to produce content by themselves and to adapt themselves to professional and social change. All the stakeholders must be involved in media education.

The continuing appropriateness of the Grünwald Declaration is both symptomatic of the accuracy of the analysis made and of the lack of recognition of media education. For the last 25 years numerous and rich experiences in media education have been developed both in schools and out of schools. Empirical and theoretical works have elaborated a well-defined field of research in all the regions of the world. These experiences and this body of research remain insufficiently known and shared with the result that media education has not yet moved from the phase of experimentation to the phase of widespread use.

The participants underlined the fact that international mobilization for scaling up media education was a matter of urgency and that there was a need for regular evaluations to assess and update the implementation of the proposed recommendations. They also mentioned that these actions were coherent with the international commitments and that they came within the framework of the agenda of the international community regarding the Millennium Development Goals and the World Summit on Information Society.

The stock-taking of this two day-meeting resulted in the elaboration of twelve recommendations for priority actions intended to foster the operational implementation of the four Grünwald guidelines that remain valid:

- I. development of comprehensive media education programs at all education levels;
- II. teacher training and awareness raising of the other stakeholders in the social sphere;
- III. research and its dissemination networks;
- IV. international cooperation in actions.

These recommendations which make up the Paris Agenda apply to all stakeholders at all levels of intervention and coordination, whether local, national, regional and international.

I. Development of comprehensive media education programs at all education levels

Recommendation 1: To adopt an inclusive definition of media education

The integration of media education in school programs requires a clear definition of the scope of media education. Today the question is no longer how to distinguish between education “with” media as pedagogical tools and education “about” media as a subject for study but to place media education within an economic and social environment undergoing massive changes due to the development of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Media education applies to all media whatever their nature and the technologies used. Far from challenging media education practices these changes enrich them with new skills regarding information knowledge and interactive communication including the social, legal and ethical dimensions involved.

An inclusive concept of media education has three main objectives:

- to give access to all kinds of media that are potential tools to understand society and to participate in democratic life;
- to develop skills for the critical analysis of messages, whether in news or entertainment, in order to strengthen the capacities of autonomous individuals and active users;
- to encourage production, creativity and interactivity in the different fields of media communication.

Recommendation 2: To strengthen the links between media education, cultural diversity and respect for human rights

Built on these common bases, curricula will be adapted to the diversity of the cultural, educational, social and economic contexts in order to avoid the adoption of models that would not suit local realities.

Given the development of international exchanges and the globalisation phenomenon, media education should foster intercultural understanding and promote local cultures everywhere.

Media education contributes to people’s empowerment and a shared sense of responsibility in society and as such is part of citizenship and human rights education.

Recommendation 3: To define basic skills and evaluation systems

According to these principles, the basic skills and knowledge to be acquired are both transversal and interdisciplinary and should be specified for each level of the school system. Their evaluation should take into account students as well as teachers in training. These programmes could be compiled and analysed in a comparative study that would highlight their common features and differences; they would help to structure media education and improve the relevance and effectiveness of its curricula.

II. Teacher training and awareness raising of the other stakeholders in the social sphere

Recommendation 4: To integrate media education in the initial training of teachers

Initial training of teachers is a key element of the system and must include theoretical dimensions and practical skills; it needs to be based on a good knowledge of young people’s media uses. In times of rapid change, this training must rely on institutional actions and self-training, using teaching aids that have been tested and validated by teachers and students.

Recommendation 5: To develop appropriate and evolving pedagogical methods

The main purpose is to set up new “active” methods that are incompatible with ready-to-teach recipes and require an evolution of the teacher’s role, a greater participation by students and also closer relations between school and the outside world. Teaching materials and tools, either free of intellectual property rights or with fair and negotiated copyrights, have to be developed to be fitting with such new methods. They need to be produced in close collaboration between teachers and students, whatever their formats, covering the whole range from printed manuals to digital spaces of collaborative work.

Recommendation 6: To mobilize all the stakeholders within the education system

The integration of media education in the education system has to mobilize all stakeholders. The awareness of curricula managers, school directors, chief education officers, etc., must be increased in order for them to assume the responsibilities that legitimize these actions. In the framework of regional and national missions, experts could be at the disposal of official education authorities to launch awareness raising initiatives.

Recommendation 7: To mobilize the other stakeholders of the social sphere

Media education cannot be limited to the school environment; it is also the concern of families, associations and media professionals.

Parents and families along with civil society associations must contribute to it in the schools and outside the schools, in non formal locations, if media education is to move from the experimentation phase to widespread innovative implementation.

Media education should be integrated in the professional training of journalists and include legal and ethical knowledge. It also applies to all media professionals, content producers, editors, broadcasters, etc. Efforts have to be made in order to encourage the production and broadcasting of good quality programmes devoid of stereotypes, especially about young people. They should promote dialogue and bring together media professionals, educators and citizens. The regulation authorities have also a vested interest in participating in media education initiatives as self-regulation and co-regulation play an increasing role in parallel to regulation.

Summer schools organized at regional and national levels can encourage exchanges and the dissemination of best practices. They can contribute to the continuous training of teachers and to the spread of media education. Festivals and workshops can give more visibility to the productions of young people and increase the value of media education initiatives.

Recommendation 8: To place media education within the framework of lifelong learning

Media education is not only for young people but also for adults whose main information and knowledge sources are media. In this context, media education is a process of quality lifelong learning. It is important to provide adults who did not have this opportunity with continuous training modules that will help them to become freer and more active citizens in society. Tools of various kinds have to be put at their disposal to raise their awareness and train them. The continuous training and self-training of adults have to be implemented at the local level with the support of civil society associations, NGOs and experts.

III. Research and its dissemination networks

Recommendation 9: To develop media education and research in higher education

Higher education is the link between training and research as there is a need to guide and monitor empirical practices. It is necessary to develop different directions for research:

- theoretical research so that media education initiatives can follow ongoing evolutions whether technological or social; such research should include the various conditions of production, broadcasting and use of media;
- evaluation research as close as possible to teacher and student practices in order to assess their possible impact better;
- research-action in order to mobilize stakeholders, give support to the current actions and contribute to the continuous training of teachers and educators;
- investigations on the behaviour and the role of parents and other stakeholders in media education.

Media education has to be dealt with in the framework of interdisciplinary research (education, information and communication sciences, sociology, etc.). It must be developed in close connection with studies on pedagogical innovation, on the role and impact of technologies in education and training and especially on e-learning, as well as with those focused on citizenship, human rights and sustainable development.

Recommendation 10: To create exchange networks

It is essential to build up and to share research questions as well their results in order to contribute to the much-needed change of scale in media education. Networks of researchers organized in thematic groups at regional, national or international levels will allow such sharing of knowledge. Their works should lead to the elaboration of ethical recommendations likely to result in an international charter. Calls to tender launched by national or international research bodies will also stimulate research.

IV. International cooperation in actions

Recommendation 11: To organize and to make visible international exchanges

International exchanges need to be stimulated and well organized in order to spread good practices and existing works, to grasp the diversity of the concrete situations and to encourage cooperation of all types. In that respect international organizations, like UNESCO, as well as regional organizations such as, for Europe, the Council of Europe and the European Union, have an important role to play in order to support both local and global initiatives and coordinated actions.

The creation of an international clearinghouse on media education would allow to collect, translate and put at the disposal of all a body of relevant data on media education: quality works whether in the research field or on education policies and strategies of integration of media education in curricula within the education systems. This clearinghouse would contribute to the creation of a network of key-stakeholders helping to monitor scientific and pedagogical development in this field.

The organization of regularly scheduled international events with a precise agenda is also necessary:

- international symposia with high level experts in order to assess current practices and to update recommendations. National education ministers and other relevant bodies should be kept informed of such activities and their conclusions;
- annual meetings of national specialists designed to share, transfer and increase their expertise particularly in countries newly engaged in media education;
- international festivals of media productions by young people, possibly in relation with national events, with specific awards and the opportunity of broadcasting in national media.

Recommendation 12: To raise awareness and to mobilize political decision-makers

Media education cannot come into general use without an effort to raise people's awareness and to mobilize all stakeholders and particularly high-level political decision-makers in all countries. Beyond actions taken at the national level to mobilize public opinion, UNESCO in cooperation with other international or regional organizations, such as the Council of Europe and the European Union for Europe, could launch a variety of initiatives among which :

- an international campaign to raise awareness on the importance of media education for the training of the citizen of the XXI century;
- an international meeting of education ministers that will aim at creating a strong mobilization in favour of the integration of media education in education policies;
- the involvement of the UNESCO Schools Networks and Clubs in media education events and more precisely in the creation of a festival for young people's productions;
- the creation of "media education" UNESCO chairs that will keep researchers from losing sight of local realities and will enrich theoretical frameworks as well as practices in media education throughout the world.