

Spaniards' capacity for analyzing audiovisual messages is very low

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This study, which is a global pioneer, was carried out with the main objective of measuring the media competence of citizens from age sixteen on. "This allowed us to see individuals' ability to use critical reflection to interpret and analyze the audiovisual [images](#) and messages, as well as to express themselves in a communicative situation", explains one of the study's authors, Alejandra Walzer, of UC3M's Department of Journalism and Audiovisual Communication. This study, titled 'Media competence. Research on the level of citizens' competence in Spain ('Competencia mediática. Investigación sobre el grado de competencia de la ciudadanía en España'), and coordinated by Professors Joan Ferrés and Josep Fernández Cavia, of the Universidad Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, was carried out throughout [Spain](#), with Professor Walzer being responsible for the research done in the Autonomous Community of Madrid. The results obtained in this region "are very disheartening, because they show a high level of media incompetence in the majority of the [population](#) ", she concludes.

The purpose of the study was to be able to infer whether or not citizens have sufficient knowledge and capacity to manage, analyze, participate in and evaluate different aspects related to the multimediated context in which they live. This is especially relevant, according to the researchers, if we consider that we live in a time in which technological mediation plays a huge role in our societies, and affects the ways in which we communicate, as well as the language that we use. This study, points out Professor Walzer, shows the urgent need to do away with the existing apathy with regard to this subject in terms of educational policy "Media education, communicateducation, cannot continue to exist randomly or on the sidelines of our concept of what is educational," she explains, "because it constitutes a decisive area in the formation of the citizenry and in the cultivation of the multiple languages in which we express ourselves and enrich our culture and our social ties".

Technical and symbolic deficiencies

The methodology used in this research included one stage involving quantitative work and another involving work of a qualitative nature. The first stage of the work used a questionnaire completed by a sample population of 6.626 Spanish [citizens](#), stratified by gender, age, and educational level (a total of 600 people participated in the Community of Madrid). Later, in the second stage of research work, all of the results were grouped into two categories and analyzed: technical-operative aspects (production and programming, reception, audience and technology) and symbolic aspects (esthetics, languages and values). With respect to the first category, the researchers found a significant lack of knowledge, although that level decreased slightly among younger participants, especially with regard to those questions related to the use of certain technical-electronic devices and some aspects related to the Internet. With regard to the symbolic aspects related to aesthetics, the deficiencies that were noted revealed a high level of inability to evaluate aesthetic aspects in media messages in a well-reasoned manner, as well as to use a certain level of correctness in the form of expression. "We found that people have serious difficulties defending their opinions regarding the media universe and to discern that media messages are carriers of values and contents", reveals Alejandra Walzer.

This professor presents the results of the research that were obtained in Madrid in a book which has just been released, and which is titled 'Visiones, saberes y placeres. Sobre cultura visual y educación' (Editorial Universitas, 2011 – "Visions, knowledge and pleasure. On visual culture and education"). The text includes three essays on the presence of the iconic, education in this context, and cinema about the school environment. In the first, titled 'La imagen, el texto, la máquina' ("Image, text and machine") – the author reflects on the visual and the ways in which current technology undermines the hegemonic tradition of prestige of the modern episteme in Western culture, highlighting the image as opposed to the word and the text. In this way, she analyzes the new ways of learning, reading and writing in digital forms in order to

investigate the transformations that the new technologies bring with them. In the second essay, 'Schools, knowledge and the media', the researcher analyzes the changes in which schools are immersed, the difficulties they face, the needed reformulation of the knowledge they begin with, and the knowledge which they dispense, and the reformation they must face in order to change their current conflictive social position. Summing up, the essay raises the question of what the schools of tomorrow will be like. "It is difficult to predict - responds Professor Walzer – but it IS possible to state with conviction that if they do not incorporate the technologies of knowledge and communication in a creative and natural way, and from a perspective that questions the status quo, the problems will multiply".

More information: Book: Visiones, saberes y placeres. Sobre cultura visual y educación.

Author: Alejandra Walzer

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