

Education for social communication: educational experiences with journalism in Portugal, by Manuel Pinto

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Abstract: The Dean of the Doctoral Program in Communication Sciences of the University of Minho (Portugal) and member of the Center for Communication and Society Studies (Cecs), Professor Manuel Joaquim Silva Pinto, gave an exclusive interview to *Comunicação & Educação* journal in the occasion of his visit to Brazil. Manuel Pinto tells us what motivated his entrance into the field of Education for Social Communication. He also addressed the results of his researches about the role of journalism in this area and stressed the importance of looking at children not only as sons and daughters or students, but as subjects who have their own rights of expression and participation.

Keywords: media literacy; education for social communication; media education; educommunication; journalism in education.

Resumo: O diretor do Doutorado em Ciências da Comunicação da Universidade do Minho (Portugal) e membro do Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Sociedade (Cecs), professor Manuel Joaquim Silva Pinto, concedeu entrevista exclusiva à revista *Comunicação & Educação* na ocasião de sua vinda ao Brasil. Manuel Pinto conta o que o motivou a ingressar na área da educação para a comunicação social. Também falou sobre os resultados de suas pesquisas acerca do papel do jornalismo nesse campo e destacou a importância de olhar para as crianças não apenas como filhos ou alunos, mas como sujeitos que têm os direitos de expressão e participação assegurados.

Palavras-chave: alfabetização midiática; educação para a comunicação social; educação para os *media*; educomunicação; jornalismo na educação.

Received: 03/12/2019

Approved: 04/04/2019

Manuel Joaquim Silva Pinto, Dean of the Doctoral Program in Communication Sciences at the University of Minho, Braga, Portugal, and member of the Center for Studies on Communication and Society (Cecs), came to Brazil, especially invited by the Center for Communication and Education at the University of São Paulo (NCE-USP) and by the Brazilian Association of Researchers and Workers on Educommunication (ABPEducom), to participate in the panel “Innovation and social protagonism, in media education” of the 2nd International Congress on Communication and Education and 8th Brazilian Meeting on Educommunication, held in November 2018, at the School of Communications and Arts (ECA-USP), in São Paulo.

The professor, also a member of the Informal Group on Media Literacy (GILM), which brings together eight Portuguese public entities related to the sectors of communication, education and science, is one of the most important European scholars in media literacy and education for social communication. When he came to Brazil, the professor gave an exclusive interview to the *Comunicação & Educação* journal, sharing his academic and professional career and talking about the role of journalism in media literacy, as well as about the importance of education for audiences.

During the conversation, Manuel Pinto gave an account on how he began his academic life during the Salazar dictatorship in Portugal and talked about the choice of studying History, because, at the time, Social Sciences and Communication programs had been banned in the country, and were reinstated only after the Carnation Revolution, which overthrew the Estado Novo dictatorial regime on April 25, 1974. He also talked about how he entered the field of education for social communication, highlighted the importance of expression and communication rights guaranteed to children and reflected on the challenges of journalism faced with a world in which it is difficult to produce meanings amidst the excess of information.

Comunicação & Educação: Professor, we would like you to speak about your academic career before you focused your interest on the fields of communication and education.

Manuel Pinto: I had a career that resulted very much from circumstances of life. When I finished secondary education [equivalent to high school in Brazil], I registered for History because there were no studies on Social Communication in higher education, because Salazar¹ and the dictatorship somehow banished social sciences from universities, including, of course, Journalism and Communication studies. Therefore, only after April 25 [1974²], and some years later, we had the first program.

When I started, in the mid 1970s, since there was no program, to me it was very obvious [choosing] history, because I had had a great experience as a teacher in high school, who quite broadened the horizons, and I was excited with historic knowledge. But, interestingly, I finished the history program and [started] to like Anthropology, precisely because I'd always had a great interest

1. António Salazar was head of an authoritarian government in Portugal between 1932 and 1968.

2. Date of the Carnation Revolution, which deposed the Estado Novo dictatorial regime.

for traditional popular culture. Moreover, I ended up going to Journalism because I thought it was a favorable site to see hypotheses of employment in the context of Anthropology, which didn't happen, because my life followed responding to requests and circumstances.

What happened was, briefly, in a daily newspaper, there were 427 candidates for 12 slots, at a time when there were still contests for vacancies in Journalism – this has been a piece of history for many years already, unfortunately – and I think I got in not because I had any training in Journalism, but because I headed a thought and intervention journal as a student in higher education. And that was crucial. I just came to know [that] some time later from journalists who assessed the candidates. What happened was that I also became editor of education in the journal, after two or three years, and kept this position till the end. In that work I quickly realized, first: the importance of education in journalism; and secondly, the importance of education for audiences. Because often, at the pace required to work in a daily newspaper, I was aware that the work prepared for the “hole” reserved there, for me and my team, was not well done. I liked that it was well done. However, it was rare, very rare, to have reactions from the public.

Some day, in another function, I was in Paris, at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, waiting to be received by someone, and there was a secretary with whom I started talking. She asked me if I liked to be a journalist, and I replied that Yes, but that there was this issue of not knowing how to solve the problem of, somehow, making the audience more intervening. And she told me: “But that is media education.” I asked her: “And what's that?”. She replied: “Oh, don't you know? Look, here we have these two books that describe experiences around the world. You may have it, if you want.” And that was a revelation to me. Suddenly I saw that there was a whole continent under my work, under the media, under that particular vehicle that I had never seen. I saw those people as recipients of that which we were doing, and not really as a land that we could cultivate. To talk in terms of agriculture: that land could be cultivated, skills could be developed, pedagogical work could be conducted to make this encounter with information a more intelligent, intervening and also capacity-building encounter.

Well, in that context, something very interesting occurred. The Portuguese Newspaper Publishers Association, concerned about the decline of the newspaper audience, launched a national campaign entitled “Reading newspapers is knowing more.” And had several journalists go to schools to raise awareness of teachers and students about the importance of reading newspapers and incorporating them into school. I realized it was consistent with the tip or input I had received at Unesco and that work could be done with newspapers and – why not? – with the other media too. Then I started to dedicate myself to study what could be done based on that literature, through it and the bibliographic references. I didn't have immediate access to many publications, but I wrote to the addresses they published, saying: “Look, there's nothing here. If you have materials that

help me, send me.” And I started receiving [publications] by mail, because by then there was no internet, nothing like that. We had to write letters, glue stamps, send them, then wait a month for reply from those who had received them. And I must say the response I had was amazing. Then I really started to see that there was a field of work.

In this context, I was invited to join the National Education System Reform Commission. There was a government that had such initiative and they put me there, I think because of the fact that I was a journalist — someone who had some of this communicational side to report the reform to society. So I thought I could introduce into this work the dimension of “education for the media,” as we called it, which is the translation of the French expression “éducation aux médias,” or “media education,” in English. We started to say so because we consider that “education for” is the pedagogical process, and literacy is the use of these skills – capacity that is naturally uneven in society, which sets it apart from many other factors. And ready. In this context of the National Education System Reform Commission was the Dean of the University of Minho, who said: “This perspective would be interesting in teacher and educator training programs of the university.”

And so they invited me to go to the university. I quit journalism, and started a work in 1988 – so, 30 years ago – and, today, one of my main collaborators was a student of the first class that I had in Media Education. Recently, they gave me the opportunity to baptize the child that was born at the university, and I called it “Education for Social Communication,” and not “Media Education,” because I thought that term was not significant, neither for the schools and structures of the University, nor for society in general; while the concept of education for social communication was relatively established in a meaning that generated no doubts, because it referred to media in general. There was also another reason: a Unesco book, by professor James Halloran, of the University of Leicester, argued that all media education should be, first of all, education for communication – and I always maintain that idea.

Moreover: today we emphasize so much the media side in this tradition of media and education that I think we need to go back to calling, preparing and bringing to our ground the communicational dimension, and not only the media dimension, because this leads to a major misunderstanding about our work, which is to reduce – even if we don’t do it or if others don’t interpret it that way – everything to an instrumental and technological perspective, that is, of use of tools and vehicles for or in education. Well, this is especially to educate to make the media a subject of study, analysis and intervention – in many ways and aspects – and not just in contents, but in the institutions behind them, in the professionals who develop and put into action their skills, in the technologies that are used, in the contents produced, in the genres, in the programs and, obviously, in the audiences and publics, which are an absolutely crucial factor to realize all that. That is, very briefly, a little of the

program designed for Media Education. That's how I got into this world, and here I am still learning.

C&E: You wrote about the role of the journalistic industry in media literacy. So we would like to know what would be this role and whether it has been carried out. Feel free as well to talk about the role of journalism in education for social communication, if we were to expand the notion of the theme.

MP: This topic was raised by a work done with a post-doctoral student who worked with me until last year [2017] on this issue, Maria José Brites. This theme arises from the realization that we can't talk about a news literacy or on journalism without also calling to the conversation – if we can talk like this – the publishers and companies that produce journalism. We could consider only the journalists, but we do know that they don't have total autonomy – today they have, in fact, very little autonomy –, because there is very strong pressure from editors and directors to make the journalism match the editorial project as they understand it and, above all, to satisfy audiences. This, sometimes, conditions and guides the work of journalists in a reducing manner.

So, we wanted to interview newspaper editors, publishers and writing heads to understand how they themselves saw their responsibility in the work they did as an institution, that is, if they had a perception that they had any part of the responsibility in a challenge that is widely recognized as important, in the sense that people know how to read the information critically and intelligently and, thereby, acquire skills to read the world, even in the Freirean sense. Therefore, our conclusion was that the situation observed [in relation to the directors of newspapers] is not of a Franciscan poverty, because it is true that there is some perception that they should do something, but after that they bend to the pace of work, to the lack of personnel, to the reduction of newsrooms, which was overwhelming in the last decade, and to the lack of experience – because they often scrapped the veterans, those who had more developed knowledge, and kept a much younger staff, which still needs to acquire some experience. Thus, what we sought to show with this investigation – which originated an article published in the United Kingdom³ – was that this [journalism] is a work that we cannot disregard, which holds some virtues and sensibilities, and that we need, maybe, gather around the table to see how we can help one another, so some initiative may come from there.

C&E: Professor, in addition to journalism, your researcher resume addresses some other topics, such as your experience in the Center for Study on Communication and Society, involving also the research on media literacy and TV, video games, internet and networks. What major aspects of this research could you report?

MP: Related to all of that, there is a concern that comes from my doctoral thesis about television in the daily lives of children, made in the 1990s – a completely different context compared with today. The year when I delivered my

3. Brites, Maria José; PINTO, Manuel. Is there a role for the news industry in improving news literacy? *Media Education Research Journal*, Leighton Buzzard, v. 7, n. 2, p. 29-47, 2017.

thesis, 1995, was when the internet emerged strongly. I attended a course at my university about what the internet is and, when I saw what was designed there, I thought. “I’ve been spending three and a half years of my life for nothing. In a half dozen years, the television will no longer exist, because this is something perfectly revolutionary. Well, then life teaches us to be more calm and restrained in judgments, because today we see that, although the situation has changed radically, the television still has a huge centrality in the structuring of time and even in the general consumption. The strong line we sought to develop at the University of Minho was this: seek evidence that we cannot restrict ourselves to the young generations in their relationship with the media, focusing only on the most obvious and common sense, which is “what does the media do to children and youth?” “what influence does it have, for better or for worse?” “what’s its impact on society, and in particular on youth?” That is to see what the youth does with the media. It’s to situate us in a different point of view and listen to the words of young people and children, listening not only to what they have to say, but also considering the context in which they say that.

I told a little story in the Congress [2nd International Congress on Communication and Education] that is worth to be told here as well. I wanted to listen to the children and organized several focus groups, in different social contexts, without saying that what concerned me was the television. I said I was concerned about what the children were doing when they weren’t in school. When I posed that question, they started talking about a lot of things they did: many activities. Some of them even had me afraid because they were completely organized by parents so they would follow life and be “yuppies” full of success in life – ahead of others if possible, over them. But not only that: there was in fact a great diversity of games or playful activities, and television didn’t show up. I found that spectacular. How come no one took the initiative to talk about the television? Then, at a certain point, I interrupted and said: “I’m amazed by something. The other boys with whom I talked told me something they did and that no one here does, which is watching TV.” I only mentioned that subject and there was a commotion: “We all watch it, a lot. And then I said: “Why didn’t you say it?”. “Because the teacher said ‘activities,’ and watching TV is not an activity.” And I saw, all of a sudden, that my world was completely upside down, because I set my goal, what I wanted to see, formatted it and created a framing, as if it were an activity in which wouldn’t fit that which I wanted to see. Only when I opened my framing, they immediately described their experience, but said that it wasn’t an activity because we didn’t say that we ate, for example, or drank, or breathed, or that we went to and came from school. Then I said: “All right. I’m the one who’s wrong. I have to redo all my scheme of it all that I had formatted.” All around the concept of activity I had to put in another position and start looking at the problem based on the terms that they used.

I think that what happened to me is interrelated to all media experience of games, tablets, internet, whatever. After that we developed other studies in

which we already very much adopted this perspective. That's what I highlight, because it is consistent with the cultural and, even, political movement that is to recognize the children's right to tell the world in their own terms and to be heard in those terms, and not in those that we impose. We should look at them not as students, but as people; not as our children, but as people who live in the children; not as consumers, but people who live in the consumers. In our social life, we tend to look at people according to a given pre-established notion, that interests us to see, and then we find it difficult to see that there is a person there, which is subject of rights. Children have their expression and participation rights, much more than just protection and provision rights, as contained in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN), which is law in all States that have signed it, including Brazil and Portugal, but is very unknown. Child, in the concept of the UN, is every human being under the age of 18 years. Therefore, we could say: how will children aged three or four years express what they want? Well, they express that in different ways. I found out, when I had my own children, that within a year they already deal with us in a highly sophisticated manner, but, as they grow, they intensify the way they interact, the way they get what they want and express themselves. It's necessary that we listen [to the child], but that we don't stop being adults with them, because the mistake is that we often think we should be like the children themselves, even in the way we dress, and this leads to major mistakes in the educational processes.

***C&E:* Professor, you addressed some issues that are very relevant to educommunication, such as the right of children and young people to expression. Then we take the opportunity to ask what you could tell us about the research on educommunication in Portugal.**

MP: First, we don't use the concept of educommunication. I have been a supporter of the concept, but obviously we are also fruit of our context. The perspective from which I developed these activities and did research with my teams was very focused on the media. Therefore, we can say that, from this point of view, we adopted an approach that no longer seeks to emphasize the influence of the media – I will clarify this –, but the way it acts as a powerful agent of socialization, from an early age, in its variety of expressions, and is appropriated naturally in different ways and also at different levels, because, in that encounter between the media and young people, or users in general, we have to bear in mind that there are always economic, social and cultural resources of the very receivers. The meaning results from this encounter and from this relationship, and not just from the “influence of the media” factor: also [results from] that which social actors introduce to this encounter.

What we find is that there are inequalities, often dug and deep, that we see even on the internet. I think, today, we can only give one example, we are witnessing a phenomenon that is no longer of unequal access, because, practically, as to the device and the machine, we can say that almost everyone has access – and sometimes they even sacrifice other consumptions so they can have a

good version of a smartphone, for example. But the problem is that inequalities are beginning to be seen at the level of usages. We adopt usages that take advantage of resources that exist on the internet to make sense of a happier, more significant life. As for this level, currently there are investigations showing that inequalities are being dug. It's completely different, for example, interacting with the universe of my social network, or of two or three social networks and some other operations I do with the smartphone, or exploring the entire panoply of resources that can be found, including that which I can create and develop on my own in response to requests from the medium.

C&E: Still taking the opportunity of this discussion on the issue of inequality, but keeping the subject of the previous question, could you speak a bit more about the role and the contribution of journalism to educommunication, from this point of view that we just discussed?

MP: I am very sensitive to this issue because, first, a lot of my contact and my experience with the media was as a journalist. The issues that led me to discover the media and educommunication were precisely motivated by issues of journalism. Well, they are today, due to additional reasons, even more alive and more raw. I think that, today, more than ever, we all have a major challenge as to make sense of the world we live in. This is difficult, because many dimensions have no sense or have a multiplicity of meanings, so we need to have compasses, guidance machines or GPSs that guide us in the mess, that tell us: “this path is too cluttered, it is better to go through there”; or that say simply: “I’d better stop and look again with another look,” for example. Or seek alternative sources of information.

In fact, the world today is a world of difficult reading. We, older people, have some references of the past that even allow us to classify phenomena, organize the chaos – the magma, almost, in a way – of information in waterfalls [gushes] that circulate. But, for someone who’s taken on the stream, it’s hard to hold on to something and say, “Whoa, what’s going on here?” I see the great challenge of a news literacy as an experiment, a search for the answer to this question: “Whoa, what’s going on here? What sense does this have? Where things are going? I can continue in this current with nothing else, no tools, no instruments?” I start, therefore, to pose the question as [if I were] a user who may be confused and have difficulty, based on what is observed, make decisions that life imposes. And in saying “the individual,” I also add the communities when they make their decisions about their future. The thing is especially dramatic when we see whole communities eventually go on this wave, for example, of misinformation, which is one of the major challenges of today.

Therefore, I would say that the work that becomes crucial to do is, first of all, understanding how information is produced today, who produces it, what sources support it, what credibility it deserves, what elements those who give the information provide so we, as users, can evaluate the trustworthiness

of the information that we are reading. That poses a challenge, to users, to journalists and to those who produce it; it puts information to circulate. Today, for better or for worse, journalists have lost their monopoly on the word in the public space and, if so, journalists can then shout in the public square... Reality has more power. There is today what an already retired Portuguese sociologist [José Madureira Pinto, retired professor of the University of Porto⁴] called “the multiplication of poles of enunciation in society.” It is not that it is concretized, because it is also not true that anyone does that. There they are again the inequalities at work. This is a sham, a conversation that we made a warning. They say it like this: “today, everybody makes and puts information, or can put it”. No! It depends on resources and competencies that are not born with the people; Therefore, it is necessary to develop them. It’s a trick when we say that “anyone can do it”, and it is important to take this into account. It is precisely because not everyone can do it that people’s training matters – or their empowerment, if we want to use a big word.

Therefore, I consider that, on the part of journalists, one of the most important jobs to do today, from the point of view of capacity-building of the audience, is to be more transparent as to the processes followed for the production of information and report to them along with the text or the content of the information they convey. While many are still clinging to the idea of objectivity – that we know can be an ideal, but it’s not possible, because we always disseminate information and choose what we say from some point of view or frame –, it is necessary that they tell us, for example, what they’re saying: if all elements have been checked; or if there are elements that have been verified in part and, therefore, they are not sure of what they are saying. This is crucial, often, for us to say: “this is serious”; or then: “Oh, the title per se points to a very serious thing, we’re going to check it.” There’s a lot of flats, as they say in that song. So, we are left in doubt.

What precisely distinguishes the work of a journalist who is bound to a code of ethics and deontology is that he does this work supposed in the implicit contract with society. But I say more: today he must tell us what he did, with a sort of ‘making of’ of the news or story. That doesn’t mean he has to do another piece – although there are cases in which other parts begin to appear in parallel –, but tell how something occurred and where there were the difficult points, the strong aspects, of which they are sure ... I think we need to work this side of journalistic ethics. With the digital medium, it is observed that surveillance of journalistic ethics “has been undignified” – we use a lot that expression to say that something has deteriorated a lot. But today ethics is also ours, because we, or many of us, can publish; we also need to have the notion of some values of journalists, who had a monopoly on the word. I mean, I need to have the notion, for example, that, if I publish an image of a third party, I might be breaching their image rights. Or, for example, if I say something without checking and I come perhaps to conclude that it’s not true, I have the moral duty to correct it. These are basic things of human coexistence,

4. PINTO, José Madureira. A prática da razão sociológica: forçando os limites. In: SEMINÁRIO DE INVESTIGAÇÃO EM MUSEOLOGIA DOS PAÍSES DE LÍNGUA PORTUGUESA E ESPANHOLA, 1., 2010, Porto. Anais [...]. Porto: Universidade do Porto, 2016. p. 16-26.

I would say, but nobody learns them why we continue to think that it is up to the journalists. I advocate that we – who are dedicated to media education or educommunication – must assume this as a task as well.

C&E: With the exception of a few attempts, here in Brazil still there is not this space to “delve into” the process of producing journalism. In Portugal, is there already?

MP: An experience emerged now that is being promoted by the Journalists’ Union, (probably the only profession in the country) which was not able to gather a Congress since 1998 and did it, finally, at the beginning of last year. To my amazement, one of the themes approved unanimously in the final motion of the Congress was the importance of media literacy for news, and [these professionals] were willing to collaborate with the Ministry of Education to implement training [courses] with the professors from all over the country. They asked help from professors who were journalists and are teaching journalism in universities, so I’m advising the direction of the Union in this work. I still don’t know where this is going, because we’re going to start with a group of seven pilot schools in several regions of Portugal and then we’re going to expand the project to all over the country, with a set of about 100 journalists lined up in the participation in the process.

They will explain to people what is journalism and its importance, fake news etc. I hope, in the process, to introduce a new perspective that I consider more important, which is to listen to the youth in schools – because journalist don’t listen and, again, they are the ones who have the truth to tell others, which I think is important. But there are other things they need to listen to, otherwise nothing changes. I mean, they will still believe that they can live without audiences and without talking with them – in this case, with young people and teachers, that will be the first interlocutors, since then after that the teachers will do the work in schools. This process has to take place on both sides, not only one. But all the force is so great that I said: “I’m not going to do anything in advance without introducing my question; I’m going to let them go ahead, and then, in the actions, I will try to propound some other issues that can enrich the work, posing them as follows: to enrich this work, we need to listen more, to know what they [young people] like, need, why they criticize the journalism they have today, why they don’t care about this, what they would care about...”. Journalists are not well, and they don’t want to listen. This is a paradox. I don’t admit and don’t accept it, from a professional point of view, that I’m seeing my ground running away and doesn’t understand why it’s running away. They would say “no, no, I have to do more journalism”; right, but journalism for whom, if you are running away? That’s almost basic, but I don’t see this awareness.

I think one of the major issues introduced by the internet is that we have to put things in circular form, from various sides, not just one, top-down, but they continue with the idea that they [the journalists] are the ones who have

to say what are the news. I don't have to tell the journalists what are the news. Well, then I can also have my sensitivity. I don't take from them the power to edit, and they can choose to make their agenda, but they have to listen to me, because I am a citizen with rights. By the way, there are rights in society, in other fields, which are not so easy to find in journalism. This is a serious issue of the future of journalism. I addressed that in a text available on the internet⁵ – my aggregation tests, the public examination to be promoted to the [professor] chair, where you have to submit a lesson on an innovative topic, idea that I exposed already in 2008.

C&E: We have talked about various terms: education for the media, educommunication, media literacy, and media education. These concepts present intersections and differences. What is your position regarding them?

MP: I think they are very important concepts because they express realities and come from practice, so that they all express in their manner a concern that I consider common: how the worlds of communication and education can dialogue. This, in turn, has an underlying idea that I also imagine to be common: it is important that they dialogue. Based on this, I understand that the designations that were found historically to name these concerns, so we understand them, are facets, angles, approximations, ways of seeing the core problem. From this point of view, I think they're a wealth and it's good that there are different designations. That said, I also think – and saw with great joy that being underlined at the 2nd International Congress on Communication and Education, from day one, by professor Ismar de Oliveira Soares – that it is important to make efforts towards convergence. Convergence does not necessarily mean that we disregard or set aside the perspective from which we have developed our work until today. In my view, it means that we were willing to dialogue with on another to enrich our own practices. And I see with joy that, either on the side of educommunication or the side of media education or media literacy, however we like to say it, there is a broadening of agendas that points precisely to the encounter of the two traditions; not to their fusion – and it doesn't even worry me–, but to a greater proximity.

Accordingly, I see that new themes begin to appear in Portuguese universities. For example, media literacy linked to the third age, because older people often live a hard life. In Portugal there are problems: it is an ageing society, and often there are no inclusion and monitoring structures. Usually the grandchildren, because of the economic crisis, have emigrated. [Older people] want to get in touch with them over the internet, and what the grandkids do is leaving them a guide with three or four operations they can do on their smartphone to use Skype or WhatsApp, and internet use is limited to that utilitarian and immediate side. That's something great for them, of course, but if that horizon of possibilities of the internet was opened in small steps, combining it with other forms of animation, including the media, we could find an extraordinary field of action – and I think that at this point we easily match educommunication.

5. PINTO, Manuel. *Digressão sobre a "crise do jornalismo": entre definimento e re-invenção*. Braga: Universidade do Minho, 2008. Available from: <http://repositorium.sdum.uminho.pt/handle/1822/40799>. Access on: Mar. 11, 2019.

But there are social institutions that have, in the same space, the older and the younger, from the kindergarten, some in poor communities – at least in Europe it happens a lot. So why can't they communicate with one another, the older and the younger ones? Because youngsters know how to use the tools much more easily, for example; while older people have knowledge, history and a memory to tell, and so there may be encounters here. Currently, I have a doctoral thesis with an Italian (living for many years in Portugal) who conducted a research-action work, present for one year in one of these social institutions. It's a project, almost a resume, of an encounter and a joint work between these two generational poles, doing what we could call an intergenerational dialogue around the use of the media.

Another increasingly important area is that of health, because we increasingly take decisions in life guided by information we found. People "google" [and find]: "I have this problem, I'm going to look for what needs to be done"; sometimes, when they go to the physician, they just check if it's right: "oh, you got it right, because I've been looking it up, and that's really it." I mean, this can make people run serious risks, because they have not been trained to acquire information validation criteria, which could cost them a lot. For example, we are working with areas and issues that often concern life and death, without people being aware of that, because they believe, as my grandfather used to say, that "it is true because I have seen with these two [eyes]"; or, as the more illustrated said: "it's true because I read it in the paper" or "if I saw it on TV who's going to doubt that it is true?". Today, we do the same operation – on the internet: "I saw it, it was all there...". That's not true, but that's not all. How is communication developed between partners of public health institutions, for example? A public health institution comprises the technical staff, the doctor or the nurse, doctors and users ... How are services communicated and how people's rights are respected and accepted? How do they know their rights? Anyway, this is a field that's still to be explored as well, as far as I know. We are taking some steps with the doctoral thesis, and I could give other examples.

On the side of educommunication, I have seen the media issue with some force, that at times I didn't see, including the issues of fake news and news literacy, for example. Therefore, I see a perspective of future, in this chapter, with plenty of optimism, respecting the diversity of traditions, fostering the encounter between the differences, and also deepening epistemically their concerns, the major objectives that underlie these various traditions.

C&E: Finally, professor, we would like to know what prospects do you see for the study and research on the interrelation between communication and education in the contemporary context of return to conservative parameters in educational proposals.

MP: Resistance and combat is what I think to say, because, in fact, the neoliberal policies (and I speak now particularly about the European case) are being absolutely shattering in some countries – not for educommunication, but

for the very citizenry before educational institutions. This is very serious, but, in some cases – we’ve had examples of this in this 2nd Congress – parents oppose the dynamics and projects in schools that are not focused only on curricular content, because they say: “this is lost time, this is a joke; the school is meant to teach, and we believe really in seeing the grades at the end.” This is a highly reductive perspective of education, because schools have to have a much more complete vocation of their educational project, which is not just what’s going on in the classroom – and even there we can work in many ways –, but also of a school outside classes and with all informal education that follows through other channels, other routes.

Therefore, I must say that I’m frankly worried. As for what I say about parents, for example, I’ve already had concrete experiences, in European projects in which I was involved, where we would ask children to take home a form so parents would sign and grant permission to them to participate in the project in a few moments of class, and some parents refused the participation of their children, even when they wanted, saying: “I not only don’t give permission, but also criticize the teacher doing this”, filing a complaint against the teacher to the principal of the school. That seems concerning. It is obvious that we’ve already lived very hard climates in the past, perhaps harder than this; I wouldn’t say similar, but almost, to something that I recently saw emerge again here in Brazil, which is the occurrence of tipoff and the resort to denouncement, from within the groups, in relation to content that is possibly not appreciated by a power of the time. It is clear that this is the end of education. If this kind of trend intensified and was installed, I would deem that a perversion, because freedom of thought and expression is part of academic life. It is also true that brainwashing little children or recruiting them to follow this or that line of thought is not part of it, because I think our task as educators is to open horizons, not narrow them. But we cannot restrict them to any side – if it’s not to this side, it is not to that either. Therefore, I believe we have to fight and find ways to resist that, finally, adapted to the circumstances of each place.

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