



MEDIA
LITERACY:
STEP TO INCLUSIVE
SOCIETY

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Community Media and Media Literacy. Approaches from the European Community Radio Movement

isabel.lema@udc.es

AMARC-Europe & CUAC FM

1. WHAT MEDIA LITERACY IS?

According to the UNESCO *“Our brains depend on information to work optimally. The quality of information we engage with largely determines our perceptions, beliefs and attitudes.* Media Literacy provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate, create and participate with messages in a variety of forms — from print to video to the Internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy.

Media Literacy is conceived as an instrument to gain in inclusiveness:

“It plays a leading role in reducing the inequities within and among countries and peoples, and in promoting tolerance and mutual understanding through information use in multicultural and multilingual contexts (UNESCO).

The concept of media Literacy has been defined as **“the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and create messages across a variety of contexts”** (Livingstone, 2004) and includes:

“the essential competencies (knowledge, skills and attitude) that allow citizens to engage with media and other information providers effectively and develop critical thinking and life-long learning skills for socializing and becoming active citizens” (Wilson, 2011).

Media literacy has been approached mainly in the educational context—formal education schools and universities—based on UNESCO's strategy to treat Media and Information Literacy (Wilson et al., 2011). However, media literacy is not restricted to a formal education context. Instead, it spans the entire life and community media plays a relevant role as informal spaces for media literacy and community empowerment (Lewis, 2008).

2. WHAT COMMUNITY MEDIA ARE?

The Third Media Sector is characterized, above all, for being open to citizen participation and deepening in values such as human rights, democracy and social change. (UNESCO, 2010) Community radio having three essential features: non-profit making, community ownership and control and community participation.

According to the World Association of community radio broadcasters (AMARC, 2010), community media are private media actors that fulfil social aims, embodying **four characteristics**: ownership by the (geographic or stakeholder) community it serves; non-profit making, with social aims only; managed by the community with no public or private, political or commercial external interference; its programming should reflect the goals of the community.

Community media are a mechanism for reinforcing and strengthening cultural expressions, identities and social learning, especially within volunteers and managers of this media.

As Mario Kaplún posits, the processes of media democratization have two prerequisites: (1) citizens media literacy: “popular sectors should be able to deliver messages and operate in media, to handle, understand and dominate media” which necessary involves (2) a process of demystification of the media (Kaplun, 1983, p. 43),.

3. COMMUNITY MEDIA, SPACES FOR SOCIAL LEARNING AND MEDIA LITERACY

In community media, the traditional object of social education (people) becomes an active agent subject of its own destiny, according to its ability to generate language, knowledge and action (Barranquero & Saez, 2012).

Media Access is a prerequisite to literacy. However, “in the normal course of their lives, common people has few opportunities to create media content except those people engaged in community/access radio or in amateur audiovisual production” (Livingstone & Thumim, 2003, p. 15-16).

Community media activists have identified and proposed a set of basic skills that make up media literacy as **“encompassing technical expertise, critical reception practices and content production; such skills are themselves likely to be supported by experience of content production”**.

Learning and training in community radio involves the development of many abilities, especially considering that people who have never been inside a radio studio are often the ones starting community radio stations. These skills relate to the use of the technical audio and video equipment and Informational and Communicational Technologies; programme production – covering elements such as radio talk; voice performance; script writing; interview techniques; news gathering, writing and delivery; production of participatory programmes in the community; basic communication theory and practice; management skills, overall programming for a community radio...” (Fraser & Restrepo, 2001, p. 33).

In Europe, community radio stations are aware of the social impact and the outcomes of the participation of youth and adults in media. As the president of AMARC Europe states: Compared to the classic media (newspaper, tv, radio) Community Media adds an aspect to building Media Literacy: the switch from consumer to producer. Besides access, media analysis competence and criticizing media it's an additional aspect of usage of media and adding the creating of media products (Nicolai, 2017).

The need for training is obvious: there is a huge range of practice in the CM landscape from informal, mentoring to structured training concepts - > in some cases this a decision made by the people of the community radio station to whether work with mentors and do a step by step learning by doing but or if they work with institutional trainings -but usually it's because of the lack of resources if there is no regular media training at the stations . Even that's why networking is very important to spread knowledge, competences and resources. What's that for? (Michael Nicolai, 2017)

Influential networks and international organizations such as AMARC-Europe, the French National Free Radios Union, or the Community Radio Forum of Ireland (CRAOL) in Ireland have been developing innovative projects in the field of adult learning in the last decade, a factor that, on the other hand, has allowed them to design specific training itineraries for the workers and volunteers of the community radios. These proposals have been aimed at achieving three main objectives

- a) achieving European recognition of the educational benefit of the community media;
- b) to promote the education and the harmonization of the skills and competences acquired by the professionals and volunteers of the third sector;
- c) to promote the professional mobility of young people in the community media (Lucas, 2014 in Lema-Blanco, 2016).

4. MEDIA LITERACY APPROACHES IN CUAC FM



CUAC FM, a community radio based in A Coruña (Galicia, Spain), has been presented as an example of good training practices in the third media sector since they implemented (January 2014) a comprehensive annual training program that combines initial training for "new partners" with specialized workshops directed to any partner, allowing them to develop communication skills and techniques that enable them to produce and broadcast their own radio program autonomously, applying the learnt skills.

Our training program aimed at people without previous knowledge of radio broadcasting. This is carried out on a monthly basis, with a duration of 10 hours (6 theoretical + 4 practical). From January 2016 until December 2016, CUAC held 6 editions of the initiation course forming a total of 40 students.

The contents of the training program are:

- Module 1: Associationism and Community Media (2 hours);
- Module 2: Journalism and radio production (2 hours);
- Module 3: Performance and technical control. (2 hours);
- Module 4: practices in a current program or community project.

Reflecting on media goals and responsibilities is part of Informational and Media Literacy

We also organize seminars, workshops and conference to enhance our critical analysis capacity and comprehension of how media system works. Journalist ethical codes and reflection on the need of plurality, honor and accountability in media (also in CR). An example of this is the CUAC FM's Summer School organized in 2016:

- **Seminar:** "Communication for cultural dynamization, social inclusion and community development."
- **Workshop:** Radio and Free Software: Building networks for alternative communication"
- **Fiction and Drama Training:** How to create fiction radio broadcasting. Radio drama in CUAC FM.
- **Galician communication observatory:** inviting journalist and Galician alternative media to discuss how to build new media for new societal needs.
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- **The Third Sector Media European Conference (2014 Meeting),** held in A Coruña in 2014 was an amazing opportunity to meet each other, mutual learning experience and creating alliances.

Agreement with educative and public institutions

Some experiences of formal and informal agreements between social organizations and educative institutions and community radios allow children and young people to have significant broadcasting experiences in a real radio station, obtaining a previous basic training in production and communication subjects.

- Centro de Educación "Escolapios-Calasanz"
- Universidade Senior UDC

External entities:

- Council of A Coruña
- Universities of A Coruña and Santiago de Compostela
- Galician Association of People with Disabilities
- Collaboration with the Faculty of Communication Sciences of the University of Santiago de Compostela for the development of student's practices on community media.
- Collaboration with the Faculty of Computer Science of the University of A Coruña for the development of the student's ICT projects, such as RADIOCO a software program for automatic streaming recording for CM

Perceived learningship

Self-taught: "learning by doing"

Participants point out that "the practical work is the most important part". The exchange of knowledge among peers, which can be described as informal learning processes (and peer support), is highly effective.

Table Chapter One-1: Training activities performed by community radio/Learning experiences perceived by young radio activists in Spain (source: Lema-Blanco, 2015, 2016).

TRAINING OFFERED IN COMMUNITY MEDIA	
Introductory training	Training programme
Support training	Mentoring, supervision and peer support
Radio workshops	For non-members
Specialised training	For all partners (Lectures and technical training)
LEARNING PERCEIVED BY CM MEMBERS	
Theory, conceptual learning	Lectures and technical training on communication/editing, radio comments/directing and community media or communication rights
Attitudinal learning	New values and attitudes such as solidarity, commitment, volunteerism, empowerment
Procedural learning/Skills	Skills acquired through practical exchanges and new tools production (conflict management, teamwork), social skills

Table: adaptation from: Lema-Blanco, Rodríguez & Barranquero, 2016.

5. THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY MEDIA AS SPACES FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION AND EMPOWERMENT

A number of the community radios involved in the ReMC enhance the engagement in their broadcasting activity for collectives in risk of exclusion. For example, the university radio “UniRadio” (Huelva), conducts a well-known radio program with convicted people from the local prison. Cuac FM (A Coruña) broadcasts a program conducted by homeless people. Radio Vallekas (Madrid), Radio Enlace or Radio Ritmo (Getafe), they all have remarkable inclusive radio experiences with people diagnosed with psychological disabilities.

Community radio stations favour the acquisition of skills that can enhance of volunteers employability with the development of digital skills and interpersonal, intercultural, social and civic skills, increased self-esteem and perceived self-efficacy through active participation in community projects. (Lewis, 2008,).

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