



Primary school pre-service teachers' perception of documentary films as educational resources

 Manuel
Fernandez-Diaz¹⁺

 Maria Victoria
Sanchez-Giner²

^{1,2}University of Murcia, Spain.

¹Email: manuel.fernandez2@um.es

²Email: chezner@um.es



(+ Corresponding author)

ABSTRACT

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In today's society, audiovisual resources represent a fundamental form of relationship with the world and the acquisition of information and knowledge. In this sense, several scientific studies recognize the usefulness of audiovisual in general, and documentary film in particular, as an educational resource. Research indicates that cinema is not a resource widely used by teachers. This research is conceived within the framework of the initial training of teachers of Primary Education. To this end, and with the criterion of ease of access to the sample population, a questionnaire organized in five dimensions was designed. The questionnaire was administered to 213 students of Degree in Education of the University of Murcia (Spain). The results point at the documentary cinema as an educational resource known by future teachers. They also recognized the interest of documentaries for their future teaching practice. However, throughout their educational career they had not had much contact with documentary film nor were they great consumers of this type of resource. These results should make us reflect on initial teacher training in universities. Efforts should be increased to promote the acquisition of higher-level media competence that allowed teachers to analyze and select good resources for use in the classroom and that has an impact on the competence of their future primary school students.

Contribution/Originality: The main contribution of the paper is that pre-service teachers recognize the importance of the use of documentary in school. However, they have not much contact or much training on this resource. It is necessary for the university to adopt measures to improve the media competence of future teachers.

1. INTRODUCTION

With the birth of cinema in the late nineteenth century and its subsequent development throughout the twentieth, and with the development of television in the twentieth century as well and its subsequent boom, systems of production and exhibition of audiovisual products have come to our days, among which numerous documentaries have a place, genus that in recent decades experiences a notorious flowering (León, 1999, 2002, 2010). The success of documentary cinema is based, in part, on the ability to bring the viewer closer to realities that are difficult to achieve otherwise (Burgos Risco & Mayor Iborra, 2012; León, 2002). Research shows that the use of documentary films for educational purposes have favorable learning outcomes (Alyaz, Isigicok, & Gursoy, 2017; Arroio, 2007; Arroio & Faría, 2011; Culloty & Brereton, 2017; Janpol & Dilts, 2016; Seckin Kapucu, Cakmakci, & Aydogdu, 2015; Valenti, 2018). This educational potential lies in the fact that the documentary alerts us to the

world we know, or think we know, but shows it from other perspectives, triggering interests and emotions that invite us to a critical transformation of our own understanding of the world (Smith, 2014).

Considering the above, it is difficult to doubt the didactic value of cinema. For Jordán Sierra and Méndez Cestero (2017) of the great virtues of cinema lies in the ability to build a story that enchants and traps the viewer and allows him to live experiences that otherwise he would not get to know. The cinema, seen with some depth is able to leave a mark on the viewer and this is the type of cinema that should be used for educational purposes. However, not all films have the same educational value. For this, it is necessary that the films are impregnated with positive values that turn the characters into excellent references for the spectators. However, before taking a film to the classroom, a previous filter must be established, objectives and contents related to the curriculum must be established and a didactic program must be planned in which a cinematographic product that is capable of providing knowledge, thought and emotion can fit (Pérez Parejo, 2010).

Despite the wide recognition that cinema receives as an educational resource, it also has drawbacks if adequate strategies are not established for its use and analysis. Its ease of access, its motivating and attractive character and the narration of significant stories make it a resource appreciated by teachers and students. However, it is necessary that teachers have adequate training, it is essential that teachers know audiovisual language so that it can be used properly in the classroom. Otherwise, there is a risk of turning a film projected in the classroom into a mere amusement or a simple excuse. Therefore, teachers must be trained in audiovisual competence and know, at least in a basic way, the creative process, the syntax of the image, the audiovisual narrative and the message and its critical analysis (García Amilburu, Ruíz Corbella, García Gutiérrez, & García Blanco, 2012). In this sense, every teaching professional should have a satisfactory level of disciplinary knowledge, secondly, should have a satisfactory level of didactic knowledge and should apply them in a way adapted to the characteristics of the students, and thirdly should have the ability to improve their training and practice in a critical and innovative way (De la Torre et al., 2003).

Education professionals should encourage the acquisition of a film intelligence by their students, understanding this as the ability to understand the arguments, contents and ethical and aesthetic aspects of film and audiovisual products. This film intelligence is understood to be integrated by four dimensions: 1) logical intelligence gives the ability to understand the structure of cinematographic narration, 2) learning intelligence consists of the ability to remember and transfer in a comprehensive way what has been learned through the audiovisual, 3) emotional intelligence facilitates the understanding and assimilation of affective messages, and 4) moral intelligence allows the understanding of the values and countervalues transmitted by the film (De Andrés, 2011; Hidalgo Navarrete & Aliaga Zegarra, 2020).

Despite the importance that is recognized to teachers as mediators in the acquisition of media literacy and the promotion of film intelligence among students, we must remember that most teachers show a medium-low level of media competence, which can be related to poor initial university training (Gozálvez, Manaset Jorda, Hernando Gómez, & Bernal-Bravo, 2019; Ramírez García & González Fernández, 2016). In the specific case of teachers in training, cinema is recognized as an important tool for educational innovation, however, it is these same young teachers in training who recognize that much more training is needed for the correct use of cinema in the classroom, as several empirical studies show (Lorenzo-Lledó & Roig-Vila, 2017; Lorenzo, 2019). In addition, other empirical studies, such as those of Boussif and Sánchez Auñón (2021) or Porta (2018) among others, show how students learn from a film-based approach and find this methodology effective and motivating.

In the case of practicing teachers, the work of Pérez Tornero et al. (2015a); Pérez Tornero et al. (2015b) and Pérez Tornero and Portalés (2019) offer us some data, both for Spain and for Europe, that invite some concern. Some of the most significant ones are summarized for concern, among the most significant in the case of Spain as following:

- Documentary film is used by 70% of teachers in Spain, while this percentage drops to 60% in Europe.

- 88.5% of teachers in Spain use audiovisual to complement learning, while in Europe this proportion is reduced to 63.1%.
- 54.5% of Spanish teachers use audiovisual to promote competence and personal skills, while 44.7% of European teachers use it for this purpose.
- 34.5% of teachers in Spain use audiovisual as entertainment, while in Europe this proportion drops to 21.1%.
- 10.3% of Spanish teachers use audiovisual for learning cinematographic techniques and language, while 24.4% of European teachers use it for this purpose.
- The use of cinema varies according to the subjects. In the case of Spain, it ranges from 58.1% of teachers who use it in Language and Literature subjects and 21.5% who use it in Technology subjects. While in Europe 74% of teachers use it in Language and Literature and only 21.1% use it in Science and Mathematics.

In the opinion of the authors, the use of audiovisual in education is often very limited and faces problems such as the scarce integration of audiovisual in curricula or the lack of media and film competence on the part of teachers (Pérez Tornero et al., 2015a; Pérez Tornero et al., 2015b; Pérez Tornero & Portalés, 2019).

Taking into consideration the importance of documentary film as a resource for teaching and learning, as well as some of the difficulties faced by the use of audiovisual in the classroom, this research aimed at making an approximation to the perception that teachers of Primary Education in training have about documentary film.

2. METHODOLOGY

In relation to the sample analyzed, it should be noted that it is an incidental sample, chosen under the criterion of ease of access to respondents. The participants were 213 students of the Degree in Primary Education of the Faculty of Education of the University of Murcia, of which 66% were women and 34% men, with an average age of 20 years. The questionnaires were administered between 2018 and 2021.

A questionnaire was designed to know the perceptions of future teachers in relation to documentary film. The questionnaire was structured in five dimensions Table 1 presents the number of questions in each dimension.

Table 1. Summary structure of the questionnaire.

Dimension	Questions	
Presence of documentary cinema throughout its formative trajectory	3	Likert scale
Perception of the acquisition of competences in primary students	9	Likert scale
Presence of media and information and communication technologies (ICT) transversality in education	3	Likert scale
Use of the documentary in primary classes	3	Likert scale
	1	Multiple choice
Consumption of documentaries	1	Likert scale
	2	Multiple choice

Most of the questions were designed to obtain the answers using Likert scales. This allowed a descriptive statistical analysis to facilitate the interpretation of the data. The Cronbach's alpha index was calculated and its reliability obtained was 0.795. To interpret the value, the work of Taber (2018) was used, which had analyzed various investigations in the field of Education that applied Cronbach's Alpha index and proposed varying degrees of confidence depending on the range of values adopted by the index. Taber (2018) compilation describes Cronbach's Alpha as follows: very high (0.76 – 0.95), high (0.73 – 0.95), good (0.71 – 0.91). From the above we can affirm that our questionnaire was reliable and useful for the research proposed.

Once the questionnaire was administered, the data was tabulated with the help of Microsoft's *Excel 365* software. The tabulated data was then subjected to descriptive statistical analysis with the help of free statistical software *Jamovi*. A descriptive statistic based on measures of central tendency was used, specifically on the mean and its standard deviation. This form of analysis was selected for its clarity and ease of interpretation, in line with

what is proposed in other works that use Likert scales in research within the educational field such as those of Boza and Cruz (2012); Bravo, Borrego, Galán, and Cortés (2019); Hamed, García, and del Pozo (2016); Marbà Tallada and Márquez (2010); Martín Ezpeleta and Echevoyen Sanz (2020); Retana-Alvarado, Heras Pérez, Vázquez-Bernal, and Jiménez-Pérez (2018) or García and Villardón (2018), among others.

3. RESULTS

Dimension 1. Presence of documentary cinema through formative stages.

The first dimension of the questionnaire aimed to know how the presence of documentary cinema has been throughout the different formative stages attending to the perception of future primary teachers. The values of the Likert scale range from 1 for a frequency equivalent to "Never" to 5, equivalent to "Always". As can be seen in Table 2, the average values range from 2.46 in the Secondary and Baccalaureate stage to 2.61 in the university stage. These average values indicate that respondents perceive a medium or low use, between "almost never" and "sometimes" throughout the different educational stages studied.

Table 2. Average values of the perceived frequency of the use of the documentary in the different educational stages through which it has passed (1=Never, 2=Almost never, 3=Sometimes, 4=Almost always, 5=Always).

Question	Mean	SD
Frequency of documentary use in primary	2.58	0.792
Frequency of documentary use in secondary and baccalaureate	2.46	0.769
Frequency of documentary use at the university	2.61	0.699

Dimension 2. Perception of the acquisition of competences in Primary students.

The second dimension of the questionnaire aimed to know the perception of future teachers, obtained from school practices completed in schools, in relation to the achievement of different competencies by Primary students. Table 3 summarizes the average values obtained for the perception of achievement of each competence. Of the proposed competencies, it is observed that only three exceed the value 4, which on the scale is considered a sufficient achievement. The highest value being 4.48, given to the acquisition of linguistic competence. Conversely, the lowest value, at just 2.96, is given to media competition.

Table 3. Average values of the perception of the achievement of competences by Primary students (1=Nothing, 2=Very little, 3=Little, 4=Sufficient, 5=Enough, 6=Totally).

Question	Mean	SD
Primary acquisition of language competence	4.48	0.798
Acquisition of mathematical competence in primary school	4.09	0.781
Primary acquisition of competence in science and technology	3.56	0.912
Primary acquisition of digital competence	3.39	1.057
Primary acquisition of media competence	2.96	1.159
Acquisition in primary of the competence learning to learn	3.53	1.097
Acquisition of social and civic competences in primary school	4.28	0.998
Acquisition in primary of the competence in initiative and entrepreneurial spirit	3.27	1.116
Primary acquisition of competence in awareness and cultural expressions	3.60	1.040

Dimension 3. Media and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) transversality in education.

The third dimension of the questionnaire aimed to know the perception, from their own experience in their training as future teachers, of the transversal use of the media, both in primary schools and in the University itself Table 4. The answer options, based on a 5-value Likert scale, range from 1="Never" to 5="Always". In this case, the approach to media competence in the University is perceived with an average value of 3.27, between "sometimes" and "almost always", however, the work of this type of competences and contents in all the subjects of their teacher training is perceived with an average value of 3, "sometimes". On the contrary, and based on their

experiences during school practices, the transversal work of media competence is perceived with an average value of 2.62, which indicates that this type of content is little worked in the field of Primary Education.

Table 4. Average values of the perception of the transversal approach to media competence (1=Never, 2=Almost never, 3=Sometimes, 4=Almost always, 5=Always).

Question	Mean	SD
Work of the media competence at the university	3.27	0.693
ICT and media are addressed in all primary subjects	2.62	0.532
ICT and media are addressed in all subjects of university teacher training	3.00	0.969

Dimension 4. Use of the documentary in Primary School.

The fourth dimension of the questionnaire aimed to know the intentions of teachers in training regarding the use of documentary film in their future teaching practice. In relation to the perceived frequency of the use of this resource in the current school, young teachers in training give an average value of 2.62 [Table 5](#), while their intention to use in the future amounts to an average value of 3.72 [Table 5](#). On the other hand, when asked about the usefulness of documentary cinema as a resource for Primary, the perceived value is 3.21 [Table 6](#). From the above, it follows that documentary cinema is perceived as a little-used resource, but it is considered between moderately useful and quite useful, which seems to be linked to a medium-high intention of use in future teaching practice.

Table 5. Average values of the perception of the transversal approach to media competence (1=Never, 2=Almost never, 3=Sometimes, 4=Almost always, 5=Always).

Question	Mean	SD
Perception of the use of documentary in today's school	2.62	0.942
Intention to use the documentary in their future teaching practice	3.72	0.571

Table 6. Average values of perceived utility for documentary cinema (1=Totally useless, 2=Scarcely useful, 3=Moderately useful, 4=Quite useful, 5=Totally useful).

Question	Mean	SD
Usefulness of documentary cinema in the classroom	3.21	0.640

In addition, the study raised the question of subjects most conducive to the incorporation of documentary film. It [Table 7](#) reveals that 94.8% of respondents in the Sciences of Nature are the subjects in which the use of documentary would best fit, followed by Social Sciences with 65.7%. Much smaller proportions are recorded for other subjects, such as Language and Literature, Art Education, Religion and Social Values or Mathematics with no interest shown in the use of documentary in areas such as Foreign Language or Physical Education.

Table 7. Absolute and relative proportions of intention to use documentary film in different subjects.

Subject	N	%
Natural sciences	202	94.8
Social sciences	140	65.7
Spanish language and literature	31	14.5
Art education	26	12.2
Religion and social values	15	7.04
Mathematics	10	4.7

Dimension 5. Consumption of documentary films.

The last dimension of the questionnaire aimed to approximate the consumption habits of documentary films by the respondents. [Table 8](#) shows the frequency of documented cinema consumption by respondents. The average value shows 2.37, which indicates a medium-low consumption of this type of audiovisual, with a frequency that is closer to the category "almost never" than "several times a week".

Table 8. Frequency of documentary film consumption (1=never, 2=almost never, 3=several times a week, 4=daily).

Question	Mean	SD
Frequency of documentary film consumption	2.37	0.635

On the other hand, [Table 9](#) presents the type of documentary genres most selected for viewing. The results obtained indicate that history documentaries are the ones that are preferred in greater proportion, being selected by 57.7% of the respondents, followed by travel documentaries (54.9%). On the contrary, documentaries about economics or politics are the ones that arouse the least interest.

Table 9. Preferred documentary genre.

Documentary genre	N	%
History	123	57.7
Travel	117	54.9
Society	108	50.7
Environment	96	45.1
Music	89	41.8
Science	84	39.4
Arts	69	32.4
Biographies	48	22.5
Economy	33	15.5
Politics	30	14.1

Finally, in relation to audiovisual consumption habits, the participants were asked about the type of support used for viewing documentaries. [Table 10](#) shows that four main types of support are used although with very different frequencies of use. While 59.1% of respondents claim to watch documentaries on television, other media such as smartphones or tablets are used in much smaller proportions for this purpose.

Table 10. Support for viewing documentaries.

Support	N	%
Television	126	59.1
Computer	85	39.9
Smartphone	33	15.5
Tablet	31	14.5

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The above results conclude that it is possible to approximate the perception that future primary teachers have about documentary films. Broadly speaking, this allows documentary film to be profiled as a resource known by future teachers and perceived with some potential for use in this educational stage, as also noted by [Lorenzo-Lledó, Lledó, Pérez-Vázquez, and Lorenzo \(2020a\)](#). However, future primary teachers do not consume this type of audiovisual with a high frequency. One of the reasons may be the scarce tradition of use in the educational system of audiovisuals, something that the results show and that aligns with the works of [Pérez Tornero et al. \(2015a\)](#); [Pérez Tornero et al. \(2015b\)](#) and [Pérez Tornero and Portalés \(2019\)](#).

In relation to the habits and frequency of documentary films consumption, the medium-low consumption detected in our study, as well as the main use of television and computer, are very close to the results obtained by [Lorenzo-Lledó, Lledó, Pérez-Vázquez, and Lorenzo \(2020b\)](#). We can interpret that, if they have not had frequent contact with this medium, they will hardly be great consumers of it and therefore, although there seems to be some interest in its use in their professional future, it will be difficult for the documentary to be used successfully in Primary.

Something that also seems to abound in this sense is the low perception of achievement of competences in the media of Primary students in relation to other competences. This could also be indicating, in addition to the scarce use of audiovisuals, the scarce media competence of the teaching staff themselves due, probably, to a deficient university training in this matter, as pointed out by Gozávez et al. (2019), Lorenzo-Lledó, Lledó, Lorenzo, and Gilabert-Cerdá (2022) or Ramírez García and González Fernández (2016).

In any case, future teachers show a medium-high intention to incorporate documentary audiovisual into their future teaching practice, although it seems that this intention varies depending on the contents to be treated.

Therefore, the most important educational implication that seems to derive from this analysis is the need for the university itself to make greater use of documentary film, both to illustrate content and to show teachers in training how to analyze and select documentary films whose contents and forms can be taken to the Primary classroom. In short, from the university we must continue to deepen, in a transversal way through all subjects, in providing students with the acquisition of adequate media competence that invites them to increase the consumption of this type of audiovisual resources. The greater consumption of documentary film will probably help them to confront reality in a more critical, conscious and informed way and facilitate the use of this audiovisual in their primary classrooms to begin to change the prevailing trend.

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