

RECOMMENDATIONS
addressed to the
United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNESCO
Adopted by the Vienna Conference
"Educating for the Media and the Digital Age"
18-20 April 1999

General framework and organization

The Twenty-Ninth General Conference of UNESCO in adopting Draft Resolution 61, approved that, for its programme in 1998-1999, support for media education and the creation of media space for young people should be ensured through different modalities and actions. These actions are based on a number of different events and documents of UNESCO and its Member States, notably the "Grünwald Declaration on Media Education" (1982) and the Toulouse Colloquy "New Directions in Media Education" (1990).

Following preparatory work in 1998, the Austrian National Commission for UNESCO and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs in co-operation with UNESCO organized an international conference "Educating for the Media and the Digital Age" (Vienna, Austria, 18-20 April 1999).

Forty-one invited representatives from 33 countries attended the conference. On the basis of the Conference recommendations, it is planned to prepare for renewed action in UNESCO's Member States through UNESCO's programme in media education and the creation of media space for young people.

Chair and drafting committee:

The Conference confirmed the following nominations:

Chairperson: Susanne KRUCSAY (Austria)
Vice-Chairpersons: Alexandra POLITOSTATHI (Greece)
John PUNGENTE (Canada)
General Rapporteur: Didier SCHRETTTER (Belgium)
Deputy Rapporteur: Kenneth NOYAU (Mauritius)

The chairs of the 3 working groups were designated and approved by the conference:

Chairs: Cary BAZALGETTE (United Kingdom)
Kenneth NOYAU (Mauritius)
Jeanne PRINSLOO, (South Africa)

UNESCO was represented by Peter GONDA and Carlos A. ARNALDO. The Austrian National Commission for UNESCO was represented by Dr Harald GARDOS.

Throughout the meeting there was continuous video and newspaper coverage by students of a nearby Austrian secondary school, and radio interviews were conducted by another Austrian primary school. These concomitant activities not only ensured a lively coverage of the conference but served also as concrete examples of how young people can learn and handle media even in adult situations.

After presentation and discussion of the papers of the conference, three working groups were formed to draw out from the participants possible policy statements or suggestions regarding actions for recommendation to UNESCO on the conference theme, Educating for the media and the digital age. The following morning, a specially appointed working group attempted to structure these statements and actions into a list of policies and a set of recommendations. This group was composed of Ms Cary Bazalgette, Susanne Krucsay, Kenneth Noyau, Jeanne Prinsloo and Didier Schretter. The UNESCO secretariat assisted as observers.

General definition, principles and statements of policy

Media Education . . .

--deals with all communication media and includes the printed word and graphics, the sound, the still as well as the moving image, delivered on any kind of technology;

--enables people to gain understanding of the communication media used in their society and the way they operate and to acquire skills in using these media to communicate with others;

--ensures that people learn how to

- analyse, critically reflect upon and create media texts;
- identify the sources of media texts, their political, social, commercial and/or cultural interests, and their contexts;
- interpret the messages and values offered by the media;
- select appropriate media for communicating their own messages or stories and for reaching their intended audience;
- gain, or demand access to media for both reception and production.

Media Education is part of the basic entitlement of every citizen, in every country in the world, to freedom of expression and the right to information and is instrumental in building and sustaining democracy. While recognizing the disparities in the nature and development of Media Education in different countries, the participants of the conference "Educating for the Media and the Digital Age" recommend that Media Education should be introduced wherever possible within national curricula as well as in tertiary, non-formal and lifelong education.

- Media Education addresses a wide range of texts in all media (print, still image, audio and moving image) which provide people with rich and diverse cultural experiences.
- In countries moving towards the introduction of new technologies, Media Education can assist citizens to recognise the potential of the media to represent/misrepresent their culture and traditions.
- In situations where access to electronic or digital technologies is limited or non-existent, Media Education can be based on available media texts in that context.
- Media Education should be aimed at empowering all citizens in every society and should ensure that people with special needs and those socially and economically disadvantaged have access to it.
- Media Education also has a critical role to play in, and should be responsive to, situations of social and political conflicts, war, natural disaster, ecological catastrophe, etc.

In the light of these general definitions and statements of policy, the Participants of the Vienna Conference recommend that

1. UNESCO should facilitate several forms of research at local and international levels to address different aspects of Media Education, including:

- exploratory projects in locations that wish to introduce or to develop Media Education programmes
 - comparative international studies
 - rigorous evaluation to provide evidence about the efficacy of Media Education programmes and practices
2. UNESCO should facilitate cross-cultural evaluation of initial and in-service teacher training methods and programmes, and ensure the sharing of experience in their utilisation.
 3. UNESCO should develop appropriate guidelines, based on ethical principles, that address corporate sponsorship of Media Education initiatives and programmes to ensure that the educational integrity of curricula, pedagogies and resources are not compromised
 4. UNESCO should facilitate partnerships and finance to fulfil the recommendations of the Vienna Conference and help to design an action plan.
 5. UNESCO should make better known the existing copyright conventions and should encourage the development of national and regional copyright instruments which take full account of the needs of Media Education and which provide that the right to copy audiovisual and digital media for educational purposes is no less than for print material.
 6. To facilitate and coordinate all these actions, UNESCO should set up an international Clearing House for Media Education.

This Clearing House should collaborate with functioning national and international networks and organisations that deal with Media Education. It should stress co-operation among all experts and organisations dealing in a formal or informal way with Media Education. It should:

- share strategies, disseminate Media Education materials, promote and stress awareness of Media Education;
- be a permanent observatory for the development of Media Education;
- give special attention to wide dissemination in order to encourage equality in development of Media Education in all countries and languages.

The Clearing House should be set up as soon as possible to fulfil all the recommendations adopted during the Vienna Conference

The participants urgently recommend that UNESCO review its programme for Media Education and allocate the resources required to implement these Recommendations.

UNESCO and all the participants of the Vienna Conference should endeavour to transmit and disseminate these recommendations to the national representatives of UNESCO and other interested institutions.

Approved unanimously by the participants of the Vienna Conference in plenary session.

20 April 1999, Vienna.