

A school and community radio experience in Pilcaniyeu, Río Negro, Argentina

Una experiencia radial escolar y comunitaria en Pilcaniyeu, Río Negro, Argentina

Felipe Navarro-Nicoletti

Institute of Research on Cultural Diversity and Processes of Change (IIDyPCa)
Universidad Nacional de Río Negro (UNRN).
fnavarro.nicoletti@gmail.com
Código Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3214-3009>.

Jimena Isabel Aguirre

National University of Río Negro (UNRN)
Institute of Research on Cultural Diversity and Processes of Change (IIDyPCa)
National University of Cuyo (UNCUYO)
aguirrejimena@yahoo.com.ar
Código Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8681-247X>

Abstract

Community radio stations are initiatives that -within the educational framework- make voices and claims visible, as well as strengthening participative social dynamics. The present paper aims at analyzing various communication theories within the educational field from the viewpoint of the community school radio "Hueney", which constitutes a significative experience that places value on the everyday lives of rural youth engaging with their environment. This work presents a qualitative and analytical methodology through the use of interviews made to relevant participant members of the aforementioned radio station. The conclusions reflect that the radio not only as a means of support, understood as mediation of the voices of the surrounding community and bond that strengthens the cultural and social identity.

Keywords

Interpersonal communication, community education, political of development, public politics, democratization.

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Resumen

Las radios comunitarias son iniciativas que en el marco educativo visibilizan voces, demandas y fortalecen las dinámicas sociales participativas. El presente trabajo analiza diversas teorías comunicacionales en el campo educativo desde la radio comunitaria escolar “Hueney”, que es una experiencia que pone en valor la cotidianidad de una juventud rural que dialoga con su entorno y resignifica la cultura local. La metodología utilizada es cualitativa, se trabajaron entrevistas a actores relevantes del contexto comunitario y el análisis documental de normativas y proyectos de la escuela vinculados con la radio. Las conclusiones permiten profundizar sobre la radio más allá del soporte, entendida como mediación de las voces de la comunidad aledaña y vínculo que fortalece la identidad cultural y social.

Palabras clave

Comunicación interpersonal, educación comunitaria, política de desarrollo, política pública, democratización.

Introduction and state of the issue

Celebration of the Human

Voice When it is genuine, when it is born of the need to speak,
no one can stop the human voice.

When denied a mouth, it speaks with the hands or the eyes,
or the pores, or anything at all.

Because every single one of us has something to say to the
others,

something that deserves to be celebrated or forgiven by
others.

In the following work we aim to discuss the importance of public and digital policies in the construction of a comprehensive, dynamic and productive educational project; they constitute an interesting factor of social identity construction. Based on a case study, we worked on certain categories in interviews conducted with members of the educational community of Pilcaniyeu (rural area of Río Negro in Argentina). We deepened theoretical

views that provoke analysis and reflection on the incidence of community radios in the school and its context.

The case refers to the Middle Education Center No. 41¹ located in the town of Pilcaniyeu, located 70 kilometers from the city of San Carlos de Bariloche, in the province of Río Negro, Argentina. This town has 757 inhabitants registered in the 2010 census. Population stability has always been an important issue for this rural town that has a high mobility. Thus, the creation of educational establishments is key to the formation and retention of the local young population.

Social complexity, that is, the “crisis” due to the current political, social, technological, economic and cultural changes, is increasingly reflected in schools (Aguirre & Stahringer, 2015, Cardoso, 2006, Ferraros, 2010, Freire, 2004; Huergo, 2007; Sunkel and Trucco, 2012; Torres, 2001; Walsh, 2008). Stereotypes, tastes, preferences and interests are exposed in the media and seem to impose themselves against singularities and in “what happens in educational institutions.” We are talking about “fashions” or global changes that are not only cultural but also economic and political. The local identity in the global world is blurred (especially by the influence from the internet networks); more and more, personal relationships, preferences, interests and life dynamics are diluted. For this reason, we are interested in aspects related to the application of public policies oriented to the school environment that have led to the generation of communication channels of the singular and the local, such as radios of modulated frequency. These initiatives enhance social skills in students and other community actors that promote the construction of identity and belonging not only within the framework of the school but also in the community where it is inserted (Martín Barbero, 1987 and 2008; Galeano, 1989 Hall, 1996, Kaplún, 2002, Magarola, 2010, Uranga, 2016, Uranga & Thompson, 2016), generate valuable texts that reunite the subject with their cultural surroundings.

1 This school was founded on February 23, 1921 in the department of Pilcaniyeu. It was born with the arrival of General Julio Argentino Roca in the military campaign called conquest of the desert (military campaign in which the Argentine Government, between 1878 and 1885, aims to incorporate to the national sovereignty land already occupied by indigenous peoples), it was of a territory already inhabited by native peoples established in lands acquired by the “Ley Avellaneda” (It refers to the immigration and colonization law No. 817, whose objective was to populate and take advantage of land extensions and, therefore, land was granted to those who requested it in 1891). Ten years after its founding, the train arrives at Pilcaniyeu, communicating with the rest of the departments and in 1939 the Promotion Commission is created, which establishes legal status in the locality.

The chosen case as a community-based radio station is framed in a communicational field of dynamics and discussions still in force and mobilizing, where community radios and alternatives are rescued as democratizing means of the voice of the popular sectors and as a generation tool of community participation and socio-political identification of a claiming nature (Martín Barbero, 1987, Kejval, 2009, Graziano, 1980, Huergo, 2009, Mata, 1988 and 2009, Pulleiro, 2012). Community radios contribute to the social development of communities, as seen in various situations and, especially, in the Colombian experience (Álvarez Moreno, 2008).

It should be noted that, we know that there are different financing models for radios according to the public policies of the countries, they imply in different ways the responsibility of the State. The States have control over the planning, management and monitoring of the radio spectrum (Binder, Fisher & Godinez Galay, 2017). The history of community radios in its generality is marked by the different state operations, where the legal framework becomes fundamental for the support of said media, not only for the economic benefits that it accesses, but also for a media and political assertion in their social participation. If we take into account that the radio selected for the analysis of this work has a stable legal framework when the vast majority does not achieve it, it becomes key to understand its importance, the value that it has developed for its particular environment and for the field of popular, community and alternative communication in general.

Materials and methods

The CEM N°41 began its activities as a unified basic cycle (UBC) in 1989, counting with the first three years of the school year and sharing physical space with the primary school N°269, where the students had to migrate to other locations at the end of the pedagogical cycle. In 1995, the modeled higher cycle (MHC) was created in which the fourth and fifth year of the school cycle were integrated, adding the “agroforestry” modality, which made possible the stability of the community with an inclusive rural activity where young people were no longer forced to finish their higher pedagogical cycle in another establishment.

The school building was completed in 2000 and has five classrooms, a staff room, a radio room, a library, a workshop room, restrooms, a preceptory

and housing for more than 100 students. The Center for Middle Education No. 41 of Pilcaniyeu, like other educational institutions developed their curricular and extracurricular projects through public policies that allowed financing and accompanying them.

In the case to analyze, we worked with policies such as the “Program to Support the Policy of Improvement of Educational Equity” (PROMEDU), the “Institutional Improvement Plan” (PMI) and the “Youth Activities Center” (CAJ). In the case of PROMEDU, it is a policy implemented since 2012 with the aim of generating greater educational opportunities for children and young people from different social strata, from the financing of support activities, promotion of the secondary level and financing to various educational infrastructures. This policy promoted by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Federal Planning, Public Investment and Argentine Services with funding from the Inter-American Development Bank, sought to cover initial education for children of 5 years, incorporate students to state schools by establishing an extended day and increase the level of efficiency of the secondary level with the financing of curricular projects of interest.

The PMI initiated in 2014 by the Ministry of Education in conjunction with the National Directorate of Information and Evaluation of Educational Quality, sought to apply for the formation of institutional projects in order to improve the secondary educational quality and avoid school dropouts. Starting from a project assembled by the applicant educational institution, it should be possible to establish an initial overview, objectives, goals and institutional strategies so that said financing will be effective for the proposed objectives. Another of the policies used by the case to be analyzed is the “National Program of Educational Extension-CAJ”. The objective of this program was to generate new inclusive action areas where young people can organize the time and recreational space complementary to the school, aiming to achieve this by creating spaces for knowledge and use of the media, for example, in which locate the creation of radio supports.

In the context of the incorporation of public policies, the M.E.C N° 41 strengthened a building and a process of merging its curriculum material with a communication project that initially included the assembly of a magazine and later the radio “FM Hueney”. The policies described above financed and guided the project together with the “Argentine Community Radio Forum” (FARCO); which, in particular, provided equipment and training to different

actors in the school. In this way, the consolidation of the communication project that until now has a trajectory of 16 years was favored.

This study analyzes the training process of community radio “Hueney” and its dynamics of dialogue with its community from in-depth interviews with references of the educational institution described above and of the radio itself. The Director, the Secretary/Preceptor, Professor/Coordinator of the Community Radio Project of the school was interviewed. The elected actors had a significant commitment to the institution, which dates no less than ten years, as the case may be. From the data collected in the interviews, added to institutional documents that relate the radio project, a qualitative methodology is established that allows us to analyze certain categories (community media and local identity configuration processes, school and media literacy, community media and social participation). The theoretical cross-section that is proposed seems to us of the utmost importance in order to problematize the social processes that are naturalized within the community.

The following sections delve into the process of identity construction of the institution with the surrounding community, from putting into practice the designed communication project. Digital policies intervening in the popular and community dynamics of the educational center and some projects carried out are covered. In addition, it realizes the significance of public policies that have sponsored integration, participation and democratization through available and concrete channels.

Analysis and results

Identity construction based on the school communication project

In order to make effective the application of public financing policies in the gestation of the radio at M.E.C N °41, its management, teaching and administrative staff carried out a specific project that was incorporated into the “Institutional Pedagogical Project” (PEI). In this section we will analyze this project, from theories related to the construction of identity, in particular, of the institution with its community.

The project of “FM Hueney”, name given to the school and community radio, is aimed at “the community of Pilcaniyeu and the adjacent rural area” and as a purpose, among others, “to favor the expression of students, both orally and written” (PEI MEC 41, 2016, p. 1). We understand that it is intended to promote the skills of young people and their relationship with the community through the creation of radio support from the school environment, since as Cardoso (2006, p. 2) states, “managing is also building effective and efficient means to influence reality in search of events taking a desired course “. The creation of a communication support such as radio is clearly favorable to develop the channels of expression between students and thus establish an effective communication channel with the adjacent community that allows a closer and more dynamic relationship, constituting as an institution a particular mode of being and being in the world. The community radios, as well as the support selected for the analysis, were born in the Argentine territory approximately in the 1980s with the interest of providing means that allows the popular classes a channel of expression outside of the passive interaction that proposed the hegemonic means of communication. As of 2009, with the approval of Law 26,522 on audiovisual communication services, community radios have been re-signified in terms of democratization of the word and a more active participation of the community in which they are inserted. Beyond a symbolic claim in popular communication matters, the numerous emergence of new financing (following the new media law), have allowed a better and greater development of community media, which we reflect here in a case study. In the case presented, we define the educational radio as a derivative of the field of community, popular and alternative radios framed in an educational system.

From the search for “participation as a means to” (Magarola, 2010, p. 4) to enable forms of group configuration and new ways of relating to the community that open spaces for reflection, production and development of resources for the management of the daily problems, as mentioned in the project; it consolidates what Rosa María Torres (2001) calls “Community of Learning”. It works with a dynamic of community education focusing on a “strategy of educational and cultural development and transformation at the local level, with citizen protagonism and targeting local development and human development” (Torres, 2001, p. 2), establishing a clear link between the educational institution and the adjacent community that surrounds it. Under this premise, the CEM N ° 41 took the radio project as a channel that

exceeds technical support, but it became a key element to build a cohesive group configuration at an institutional level and, with that image, establish a sphere of relationship and dynamic participation. In this way it was possible to express and publicize the daily events of the community, among other aspects. As the school director mentions:

...there is a great relationship with other institutions in the town because they have a space to come and communicate what they are doing. Hospital referrals, for example, have talked about prevention of diseases such as influenza A. Also the Catholic or evangelical church. Different institutions.

As a generation of internal ties within the educational institution, certain objectives were proposed with a view to the consolidation of an operational team. A team was formed because “it is necessary to carry out a common task that leads to a result, process, products, services, practical work or field, learning for which specific skills of each one are needed” (Ferraros, 2010, p. 2). . In the general objective of the project is the proposal to “promote skills for teamwork”, that is, to be able to generate specific capacities to investigate with more solidity and thus establish mechanisms of relationship both between the same actors of the establishment and outside with the community, to be able to offer resources before daily problems. The group of young people, members of M.E.C N ° 41, proposed as a result: to establish a dynamic interaction with the community as an institution (team) that accompanies and sponsors the solution of everyday problems. This activity is carried out not only from the curricular development, but from communication channels generated for it. This is why the consolidation of an internal operative team (management) becomes fundamental in a first step for the close relationship between the school and its insertion community.

In the aforementioned project, an action plan was established where a work in stages was proposed. They began with the consolidation of a group responsible for the management of the radio project, continued with the call of young people from the institution who do not belong to the management group, then proposed to generate strategies for the inclusion of communicating vessels between the classroom education and the activities produced on the radio and, finally, they expanded everything previously worked on to the local community. In the first place, what is proposed by the educational community is to generate, in addition to a physical group of people who administer and produce on the radio, an identity that is

constructed through difference and not outside it (Hall, 1996, p. 18), that is, establish an identity as an educational institution that does not enclose itself, but may have the capacity to generate a consolidation of the operational team that at the same time can meet the needs of the community and other institutions that surrounds it, and not merely remain in the scholastic pedagogical development. On the other hand, the identity that they projected from the school is not essentialist, but is clearly “strategic and positional” (Hall, 1996, p. 17), since they were positioned from a reference point to the community, as mentioned by their director: “That identity was generated and it was getting into society (...) we are proud to say that it is the radio of the people, it is truly heard by all the people”. The identity that was forged from the CEM N ° 41 is key to encourage community participation, since, as Magarola (2010) mentions, “participation is communication” (p.4) and it is this communication that allows integration more consolidated between the school and its community, being able to close the proposed cycle as an institutional action plan on the one hand and generating a community building process that consolidates the community as such, with a more defined identity.

The project achieved a consolidation of a stable team formed by young students from different courses of the school, in tasks of management and organization of the weekly radio broadcasts, that is to say that the participation took place from the production of contents and even at the administrative level. The pending challenge is to train students in the technical level of radio maintenance, since today there is only one reference that is responsible for it fundamentally.

The M.E.C No. 41 as “learning community” (Torres, 2001), articulated a local and national development project, having as a fundamental key the relationship of the institution with its community. In the analyzed project we clearly observed a local society and its daily needs as a fundamental premise to establish a broad vision of the educational institution with a joint effort that links public policies, the needs of the community and the school with its communicational and pedagogical projects.

In short, we realized as an institutional project from the M.E.C No. 41, not only led to the communicational and educational consolidation of the institution; but also to the identity construction that is generated as an institution and at the same time as a key entity in the dynamics of social development of the community in which it is inserted.

Digital policies, education and popular and community dynamics

The use of technologies in education implies working with “technological biographies” of teachers, students and that community (Huerdo, 2007). What do we recollect in these biographies? Key stories that accompany and resignify the appropriation of the media, experiences that connect in different ways with technology. This is, in the case of community radio, a space to express ourselves in a manner that reaches different forms: teachers, students, and agents or members of the community. This approach to radio, in many cases, gives new meanings to their experiences. Adults who reconnect with the traditional music of that “their place”, with their own social needs, with events of interest and service to the other; with preventive projects or common involvement. In relation to the youngest, especially, it means recognizing, identifying and dialoguing with the most typical culture, the popular.

The radio, according to what they told us in the M.E.C N ° 41, can contribute in valuing customs, ideas, demands, myths, beliefs, facts, symbols, the produced, principles of the local. “Hueney” tries to serve the community, the school director tells us, there are broadcast from the school acts and the live music workshop to programs in which local hospital specialists, teachers, professors, church leaders/or of the Municipality participate. The school manager, excited, expresses that: “... There are guys who for example in public find it difficult to play an instrument or sing, but they go to the radio and play the guitar or sing and perform it with ease, and surprisingly they reach many families in the town”. In addition, the radio broadcasts recover practices related to the crop and livestock of the area; popular festivals and key dates that are in the collective memory of the town.

As Kaplún (2002) argues, today’s men and people refuse to remain passive receivers and executors of orders; they demand the right to participate, to be actors, protagonists, in the construction of more democratic societies. The technologies enable to produce from one/my place and at the same time common place, to be an active part in the recreation processes of the community. Perhaps, we can add, that when we allude to “living” we can also think of filling senses with the experience of your land, your origin, your home through the opportunity of radial mediation.

Initiatives such as the Connect Equality program (PCI)², which emerged in 2010, in Argentina constitute digital policies for an active and dynamic political scaffolding in order to strengthen processes of exercise of citizenship, participation and upward social mobility. The program presents a political-pedagogical perspective that seeks to reinforce the structural functions of schools and the education system in order to transform education and tend to more critical models in a logic of policies focused on this great underlying challenge (Aguirre & Stahringer, 2015). Under this program, the pedagogical use of radios in the school is enhanced. Such is the case of Radio Hueney that was benefited by training, better equipment, and access to new specific software, extension of radio coverage and more community participation.

International documents sustain the significance of the integration of technologies to education (UNESCO, 2004, NEPT, 2010, Sunkel and Trucco, 2012, IIPE-UNESCO, 2014, among many contributions), they put in consideration this real and global need to all regions. The valuable thing, from our point of view, in the case of community radio would be the visibility of voices that tell us their own, the everyday life of a middle school and its rural community. Teachers and young people get involved with the traditions through programs that describe the autochthonous agriculture, typical dances, devotions, projects, festivities and Pilcaniyeu events.

From a critical perspective of education, one of the most important tasks is that the teacher can build together with the students' experiences that strengthen cultural identity (Freire, 2004). The mentioned thing is to recover the historical, the social, and the economics of the community and in addition, feelings, emotions, gestures that transcend a teaching of transference of knowledge towards a liberating education and that gestate autonomy. Thus, other pedagogies are forged, alternative pedagogies linked to technology, "other pedagogies" that claim cultural identity and that recover political sense/s from education or pedagogies of reexistence from

2 In the framework of the PCI, more than 5 million netbooks were delivered to students and teachers from all secondary schools, Teacher Training Institutes and special schools in Argentina (from 2010 to the present). The program involved a heavy investment in the development of technological infrastructure in each of the school buildings (called the technological floor) that favors the didactic and pedagogical performance through an internal network. Likewise, the PCI linked to specific policies for the delivery of equipment for the installation of school radios enhanced the technical and pedagogical possibilities (the netbooks contained programs to be used, for example, in relation to radios).

a positioning of and from the subaltern political construction (Walsh, 2008, 2013). Pedagogies that make culture think as an agency of the social.

Discussion and conclusions

In light of theoretical contributions and field work (interviews and documentary analysis provided by the M.E.C N ° 41), some reflections arise. Today the community is not alternative in a pretentious tone, there is a denser fabric, it is thought connected, interwoven, projected to the world (Barbero, 2008). We were able to observe a communicational project that went beyond establishing media so that students could exchange opinions, but it establishes a dynamic of creativity and independent production that is not only in the school productions, but it goes beyond the means to establish itself as a part of a fundamental and meaningful construction of the identity of the community.

Martín Barbero (1987) invites us to think of “communication as a matter of mediations rather than media, a matter of culture, and therefore not only of knowledge but of recognition”, and it is in this way that school radio works of Pilcaniyeu. The radio analyzed builds its meaning beyond the medium itself. As we mentioned before, as a mediation space between the demands, opinions, experiences and necessary information that have different agents of the community and the same people that receives all this and is empowered; re-signifying the information transmitted, in areas of identity consolidation in terms of community.

The media as instruments for popular education nurture a transformative educational process (Kaplún, 2002), and that the radio “Hueney” is physically located in the school and articulated with the pedagogical processes, leads to its functioning also from a conscious dynamic of change and improvement for the community.

In the course of the analysis, we were able to account for the process mentioned by Uranga (2016) as a multiplicity of relationships, between the media and the community. The author refers to “the process by which certain cultural features are formed that end up constructing the identity of a space, group, community or territory” (page 150), as well as we could observe the identity construction that is established in the community of Pilcaniyeu from the school radio “Hueney”. In this way, taking into account

the social dynamics generated from the communication project of the M.E.C N ° 41, we understand by incidence of the social organizations to the action sustained in the time that seeks the social transformation from a perspective of law to influence and generate public discussion on certain topics (Uranga & Thompson, 2016) that commercial media generally do not contemplate.

After the incursion in the selected community radio, we were able to observe how the social expectations about the environment are covered. It generates a “right to be socially realized as a human being and a duty to organize our societies with dignity, solidarity, social justice and sustainable development” (Gutiérrez & Mata, 2001, p. 3), where radio plays a more important role, greater than to inform, but also to provide the necessary tools to the community so that they can organize themselves as such.

Finally, it is important to note the public and digital policies that gave feedback to the educational institution and provided an opportunity to strengthen the community school radio project. These sponsored the development of social skills, the openness to “wanting to be part of Pilcaniyeu” by giving voice to their young people and, mainly, they strengthened the framework of curricular proposals that are a bridge with the community. In other words, we address possibilities that legitimize and make public policies valuable because they enhance channels of participation and even democratization. In relation to the latter, it is worth noting that politics is even more predominant when it claims and recognizes local cultures from areas or places that have been neglected in economic, social and geographical terms in the face of globalization processes that vanish identities and provoke the emigration of young people.

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