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Adolescent Students as Media Fictional Characters

Relatos audiovisuales de ficción sobre la identidad adolescente en contextos escolares

ABSTRACT

Media fictional narrations on adolescents as characters and target are used by teenage audiences when looking for references for their identity building. As a starting point for Media Literacy activities to help teenage students in this process, this research focuses on the representations of adolescent students proposed by different kinds of media fictional narrations. Three European narrations have been chosen in order to analyse and compare different genres, codes and values: the television series «Física o Química» and the films «Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix» and «The Class». A classic narrative analysis approach has been applied in order to encourage teachers to use this kind of Media Literacy activities by employing methodologies that they are familiar with. The results show that such a methodology could facilitate the comparative analysis of important coincidences between these examples (such as the importance of friendship and couple relationships) and also underlines meaningful differences (like the orientation towards the future). The conclusion reached is that the comparison between such different kinds of media fictional narrations is a useful educational tool for improving Media Literacy skills and helping teenage students in the identification of the values and images they really want to choose as reference and inspiration for their own identity building.

RESUMEN

Los relatos audiovisuales que tienen a los adolescentes como audiencia y protagonistas son utilizados por éstos para buscar referencias con las que construir su identidad. Esta investigación busca comprender cómo es la identidad de los estudiantes adolescentes en distintos tipos de relatos audiovisuales de ficción, como punto de partida para la elaboración de materiales de alfabetización mediática que les ayude en dicho proceso. Para ello se seleccionaron tres narraciones europeas recientes sobre la vida escolar de adolescentes, con las que poder contrastar entre géneros, códigos y valores: la serie televisiva «Física o Química» y las películas «Harry Potter y la Orden del Fénix» y «La clase». El método ha sido el análisis textual de tipo cualitativo, utilizando como categorías las de la morfología del relato clásico. Los resultados reflejan que dicho esquema, familiar para el profesorado de Literatura, permite detectar importantes coincidencias entre relatos (como la importancia de las relaciones de pareja y amistad...), que hacen más significativas las diferencias del contraste (como la orientación hacia el futuro o el valor del pensamiento y del profesorado en dicho proceso). Se concluye que la comparación entre los tres tipos de relatos representa un óptimo recurso para la alfabetización mediática así como para ayudarles a tomar conciencia de cuáles son los valores con los que quieren identificarse y los problemas que pueden obstaculizarlos.

KEYWORDS / DESCRIPTORES

Media literacy, media storytelling, film, television, character, education, adolescents, identity.

Alfabetización mediática, relatos audiovisuales, cine, televisión, personaje, educación, adolescentes, identidad.

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1. Introduction

As underlined by UNESCO (2011), Information and Media Literacy is nowadays a necessary condition for protecting and guaranteeing the human right of freedom since it endows citizens with competences that allow them to use Media and Communication as tools of empowerment and self-orientation. Accordingly, research on the influence of Media during teenage years underlines the need to teach adolescents how to use new communication in order to increase their opportunities and diminish the risks of such influence (Buckingham, 1996; Clarembeaux, 2010; Hart, 1998; Von Feilitzen, 2004).

In 1977, Umberto Eco stated that «democratic civilization could only survive when considering the language of image not as an invitation to hypnosis but as an invitation to critical reflexion». More than thirty years after these words, the competences to encode and decode media messages have turned into a fundamental literacy, as important as traditional reading-and-writing. Despite such progress there is still an absurd and very strong tendency to think that the mere consumption of media can alone guarantee the deep and real capacity to read and understand them, when research seems to suggest the opposite (Aguaded, 2012: 7).

Supporting this approach, a number of researchers of very different contexts concur in detecting that adolescents who spend more time watching television have more problems developing a strong link with school and show significant levels of apathy, extreme orientation to the present and a lack of goals (Delle & Bassi, 2000; Dotterer, McHale & Crouter 2007; Martín Serrano & Velarde, 2001). In order to explain such characteristics, these authors underline two important issues: the difficulty of emotional self-regulation, which is connected to those activities that can be done over several hours without demanding any intellectual or physical effort (Díaz-Aguado, Martínez & Martín, 2010), and the values that are transmitted by certain television broadcasts – highly popular among teenage audiences – whose characters are strongly focused on the present and very rarely on the future. These results concur with education agents in a common concern: the major difficulty of fighting against the negative influence of such broadcasts on adolescent audiences (Montero, 2005).

Pioneer research on the risk of copying antisocial behaviour from television has detected some conditions that increase this risk of imitation: when spectators share gender with the characters that show such antisocial conduct, when these characters present other features

that the viewer would like to share (such as popularity, rebellion or beauty), when violence is shown as normal and legitimate behaviour and helps to gain an advantage, and when explicit examples of how to execute violence are shown (Bandura, 1986). Longitudinal studies have revealed that it is possible to predict the level of violence that would be executed at an adult age by considering the level of violence that was seen during childhood (Huesmann & al., 2003).

Despite the increasing consumption of new media technologies among teenagers in recent years, television is still seen as one of the leading agents of influence: a media that teenagers prefer to enjoy without the presence of adults (Eggermont, 2006), and which is considered by them as one of the principal sources of inspiration in their process of identity building (Imbert, 2002; Loirq, 2008). It seems important to emphasize that adolescents prefer television content in which teenagers star in the leading roles and particularly if they are playing rebel characters in strong opposition to authority and they are involved in current and controversial issues (Thornham & Purvis, 2005).

Research like this explains the huge success of certain media fiction with teenagers both as target and leading roles (Rodríguez-Merchán, 2013). Analysis of the most successful American series underlines that such programmes often (70%) choose to connect their plots with a hedonistic and fatalistic dimension of sexuality and only 10% choose to mention the consequences: very significant conclusions, since research has found that the frequency of viewing this content is related to an increase in teenagers' estimation of sexual activities and to the lowering of the age of first sexual encounters (Brown, Keller & Stern, 2009; Rivadeneira & Lebod, 2008).

Studies on one of the most popular Spanish television series, «Al salir de clase», find that it presents a very stereotyped portrait of teenagers (Guarinos, 2009), by mixing in a contradictory way values and problems that represent adolescents only as emotionally unstable, rebellious, undisciplined, egoistical and materialistic, with very fragile social relationships and an exaggerated orientation to risk, since in the plots these characters are very often involved in drug problems, alcohol abuse, gangs, rape or unwanted pregnancies (Montero, 2005).

In order to counteract the possible negative influence of this sort of content, a new need emerges: to train young audiences to read such representations (Díaz-Aguado & Falcón, 2006; Medrano, 2008) by analyzing and comparing them in contrast with other media alternatives that are oriented to protecting and

projecting the same values that school aims to instil. Clarembeaux (2010) suggests using media narrations as a tool to educate individual and collective memory and to protect the European cultural patrimony. Research on prevention programmes to counter risky behaviours (Díaz-Aguado & Falcón, 2006; Hernando-Gómez, 2009) underlines the efficacy of media documents – when properly selected – as a complement to other educational tools: they reinforce the emotional impact, are remembered longer, favour empathy and are more easily shared by the whole of the class, including students who normally don't read or follow traditional teaching (Díaz-Aguado, 2003).

UNESCO's Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers (2011) recommends the use of activities favouring the link between media documents and traditional teaching strategies and materials (such as text analysis in the Literature class, for instance). One of the principal goals of this program is the empowering of young audiences with competences that will help them to identify the different codes used by different media and narrative genres. As educational activities, it recommends comparative analysis between commercial and independent productions and evaluation of the deep impact that new technologies may have not only on the external dimension of new representations but also on the very core of them. According to these Media Literacy goals and activities, the portrait of teenage characters in school contexts becomes one of the most meaningful and urgent sorts of representation to be considered.

As a starting point for the elaboration of Media Literacy materials, the main goal of this research is to go further in the comprehension of how adolescent students are being represented by different sorts of media fictional narrations. More specifically, this research aims:

1) To understand how adolescence is represented in different fictional genres (its search for identity, the value of knowledge, the relationship with teachers) in order to support the contrast analysis between televi-

sion series with teenagers in the starring roles and commercial films and alternative narrations proposed by independent productions.

2) To test the use of traditional tools of narration analysis (such as those preferred when analysing literary texts) in the critical evaluation of the current media representation of teenage students.

3) To propose specific examples of media narrations to be used in Media Literacy activities. These examples should support the training of competences

The three cases may be used as interesting educational tools oriented to supporting debate and reflection about the fundamental tasks to be carried out during this period of life: through their shared analysis they may all become aware of those features of the characters that teenagers admire as values to be identified with, while other features, in contrast, are actually obstacles to preventing such awareness. These narrations may also represent an excellent resource for Media Literacy with teenagers due to their connection with the biggest issue that adolescents care about as media users (as consumers of media representations and social webs): their own identity building.

such as: the identification of specific storytelling codes of different media and genres, the critical evaluation of the impact that new technologies may have on the representations that they make, the detection of and ulterior comparison between positive references and patterns (teenage characters who care about the future, knowledge, improvement and self-empowerment...) and negative ones.

2. Materials and methodology

In view of the goals of this research, three specific narrations were selected according to the following standards:

1) Their characters and plots should pay special attention to the search for self-identity during teenage years, specifically in school contexts.

2) They should all have been recent European productions, as an expression of a common cultural patrimony to be comprehended by teenagers.

3) Their main characters should share age and equivalent school year.

4) They should support the comparative analysis between genres and storytelling approaches as well as the comparative analysis between different portraits of adolescent identity.

In line with these standards, after considering 50 European narrations, three examples were selected, all of which starred adolescent characters between 16 and 18 years old and framed their plots within an academic year. They were all produced and premiered at about the same time (between 2007 and 2010) and their characters and treatment were preceded – in the three cases – by considerable previous literary and/or media development.

As an example of television storytelling, we chose «Física o Química» (the literal translation means «Physics or Chemistry»), a Spanish series of considerable popularity and commercial success involving Spanish, French and American teenagers (the season selected was the sixth, broadcast for the first time in 2010 as a continuation of previous seasons starting in 2008 and created by Carlos Montero for the Spanish TV channel Antena 3 (later also broadcast in France on channel NRJ 12 and in several countries on the American continent through Antena 3 International).

This case may be considered a representative example of an abundant source of narrations that claim not to be addressed to underage audiences as specific targets (while, however, counting on these sectors as a very important part of their commercial strategies) and that choose secondary school as the main stage to place plots and develop storytelling techniques that are directly adopted from fiction for adults. The sixth season of «Física o Química» was presented as a consequence of the commercial success that the series enjoyed for two years (five narrative seasons) by developing its main characters and plots, and it may be considered a commercial sequel to a previous teenage daily soap opera, «Al salir de clase», also created by Carlos Montero.

As an example of a commercially successful narration specially acclaimed for its educational values, this research selected the film «Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix» (David Yates; United Kingdom, 2007): the fifth chapter of the film adaptation of the literary saga written by Joanne K. Rowling, a highly representative example of the abundant corpus of contemporary fantasy sagas that chose the circumstances of tee-

nage life as the core for its metaphoric proposals. Chapter by chapter, the saga of the sorcerer's apprentice refers to the challenges and changing processes of adolescents, in a step-by-step journey through all the years of secondary school.

Thirdly, and as an example of an alternative production especially focused on the educational reality of teenagers, we selected the film «The Class» (Laurent Cantet, France, 2008); created as an adaptation of the previous novel «Entre les murs» by François Bégaudeau, this film presents a deep reflection on today's educational problems, needs and challenges. It is based on the professional experience of the writer and secondary school teacher François Bégaudeau and is the result of extensive documentary work, following more than two years of discussion sessions with teachers and students (who afterwards took part in the film as the actors of the production, playing their own roles under their real names, including Bégaudeau himself).

In their respective contexts, the three narrations achieved considerable success, a shared factor that allows us to address a matter of great importance for media literacy with teenagers: contrasting and questioning the extended belief that states that films and programs of high educational value cannot achieve popularity or commercial and communicative success.

Following the line of authors such as Clémentine (2010), this research has adopted a qualitative methodology based on the techniques of film and textual analysis (Bordwell, 1985; Aumont & Michel, 1990; González-Requena, 2006).

On a more specific level, it has followed the classic categories of narration analysis proposed by authors such as the pioneer Propp (1927) or Greimas and Courtés (1982), often used in school subjects such as Literature. After a prior general analysis of the contents and the formal style of the cases, these categories examine the narrations by focusing on the following questions: 1) What is the initial state of the main characters when the story begins? What are their main motivations? What are the main aims and tasks that will direct their path; 2) What are their main features and what are these features identified with? Who and which factors act in the plot to help these characters to achieve their goals, or act against them? 3) What are the changes or discoveries that emerge at the end, once the adventure is finished?

3. Results

3.1. General characteristics: formal features and contents

The selected season of «Física o Química» pre-



Image 1: Promotional photo for «Física o Química».

sents the life of students and teachers in a secondary school by focusing almost completely on intrigue plots linked to love stories, sexual attraction and exploration, the importance of friendship, the searching for self-identity and one's own limits, rebellious attitudes and different tensions that may arise in almost every social group (such as misunderstandings, rivalry, confrontations, reconciliations...).

The plot is mainly staged in an educational centre that verbally claims to host students from a low-income background, but the gestural language of the actors and the dynamic and colourful approach of the photography and art direction departments are influenced by the visual codes of fashion catalogues and imaginary pop stars: all members of the cast (both in the roles of students and teachers) seem to be extraordinarily photogenic, and they become even more so after passing through the wardrobe and make-up departments, in accordance with the standards of the fashion trends advertised in each chapter and on the website of the series; the classrooms and the corridors of the school shine in a bright and colourful way; even the condition and decoration of the students' and educators' apartments (including those who are presented by the plot as being in a very difficult economic situation) reproduce high standards of style and exclusivity.

The narration is based on a pluralistic approach: the different groups of teenagers (and adults that interact with them) develop a pluralistic web of parallel subplots. The screenplay and the editing organize the storytelling in a constant fragmentation, where each situation is based on quickness, brevity and strategic intrigue pauses placed in order to fit nicely with the commercial interludes without losing the audience.

«Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix» may be considered a narration in the classic archetypal mould of the «hero's journey», by telling the story of a hero who must perform an important search. It main-

tains the spectacular style of the whole saga, always mixing expressive codes from the fantasy genre with certain realistic features.

Monsters, spells and aerial fights are presented with outstanding camera movements and a sophisticated display of post-editing and special effects, but, at the same time, there are also constant signs reminding us that the issues told by this story bear a close similitude to the current problems of the audience. This is expressed by the art direction when presenting the house and the neighbourhood where Harry lives with his relatives, or the naturalistic costume design, make-up and hairstyling of the students and teachers, among whom are characters of special physical beauty but also ones who are less sculptured, who may be dishevelled, have teeth imperfections or wear untrendy glasses. According to the original novel (which was created by a mother who wrote it at the same time as educating her own son, a boy of the same age as Harry Potter and his friends), the main narrative feature of this film is the use of the fantasy metaphor as a tool to represent the challenges, difficulties and peculiarities of the teenage years.

The explicit definitions and explanations of the spells and magic creatures that are part of the plot are poetical statements on fundamental issues such as the importance of a shared memory, the need for building up one's own identity through active searching, the importance of invoking humour and warmth and encouraging emotions in order to fight against fear or depression... All these are united by a main metaphor, particularly meaningful for this analysis, that seems to frame the general definition of this plot and its characters: the path these young heroes must go down is full of uncertainties and problems (as the teenage years are) that impact very strongly on their lives and the lives of the people who accompany them; they can only face these obstacles by empowering knowledge



Image 2: Frame of «Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix»



Image 3: Frame of «The Class».

in an active and progressive learning that comes –in the plot– from books and lessons, from friends (the story underlines the importance of friendship and emotions) and from conversations with teachers and other adult educational figures.

Coming from a very different expressive style, «The Class» follows a line of aesthetics and depth of reflection close to «cinéma vérité» and the documentary genre. The dialogues and the plot line are the result of the real teaching experience of one of the authors and of demanding discussion sessions between teachers and students. The narrative challenge of the screenplay and the editing was to select meaningful excerpts of students during one academic year in a class of a high school on the outskirts of Paris, focusing on capturing such situations almost in their real-life entirety: the scenes avoid summarizing what really happened, including the misunderstandings, confusion, dilly-dallying, doubts and noise that so often describe current life in classrooms.

The visual approach and sound editing capture the spontaneous movement of attention (as if the cameraman and sound operator are capturing what happens in a real lesson, without a prior film plan). Both the work with the actors and the art direction share this realistic-documentary determination by choosing natural locations and players who are not actors, who play themselves (even using their own names in the film) and who stand in front of the camera in their real appearances and diversity. The plot focuses on the education process itself (its difficulties, goals, contradictions and achievements) and on the effort that it takes to get teenagers to understand the real importance of education and thought.

3.2 Starting point and identification of the hero's goals and tasks

At the start, the three narrations present their main characters in an explicit situation of uncertainty,

directly linked to the beginning of a new academic year. Beyond the differences of expressive codes, the three present very different ways for their heroes to assume and face this situation. Even through explicit inner monologues, all the main characters of «Física o Química» express major concerns about the future and getting over the difficulties of their present: from the very beginning of a new school year, most of the student characters of the series express identification with a defeatist attitude and all of them refer to academic results as transactions to be negotiate in order to achieve a new stage of independence and relief, where no more obligations and explanations can be demanded by adults; educators are presented in romantic vaudeville subplots or detective intrigues, and even when some of them show interest in the talent of a student, as is the case of the Philosophy teacher in the first chapter of this season, the screenplay presents a situation of romantic confusion by exploiting the embarrassment of the teenage boy being alone with his young and charming female teacher. While no character from this narration (whether student or teacher) appears to be worried about educational goals, we do find explicit concern for such issues in the other two examples.

The main characters of «Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix» start the story in a time of darkness and danger, suffering from painful loneliness and longing for the only place –the school of magic– where they can be together and face the tasks and acquire the knowledge needed to fight against the injustice and fear that threaten their lives. It is important for the analysis that the narration chooses to underline that the villainous characters prefer the young heroes not to gain such knowledge in order to take advantage of their vulnerability, while, on the other hand, Dean Dumbledore and the good friends of Harry's dead parents –the main educational figures for Harry from the very beginning of the saga– fiercely protect him from those attempts. Through these characters, the narration provides an in-depth assessment of the role of the teacher and the importance of learning, crucial issues that are also at the core of the definition of the Literature teacher in «The Class»: the narration starts with a long shot of François, portrayed in a deeply thoughtful moment just a few minutes before a new school year begins.

The sequence is followed by a meeting session where he and his colleagues open the school year by sharing their worries about the educational difficulties that they are about to face. Only after this scene do we get to know his students: a group of varied teenagers,

in some meaningful cases quite rebellious and strong. Some of these students go into the classroom with a disruptive attitude, only worried about relations with their mates and focusing on taking advantage of every opportunity to defy François and all that he represents as an adult and teacher. Later on, the film shows how the linguistic skills that François tries to work on with them in his classes (vocabulary, comprehension skills and language accuracy) are precisely the tools that students will use in order to get stronger in their confrontation against authority.

3.3. Main identity features of the characters and identification of what and who is involved in the achievement of their goals

By defining the attributes of the main teenage characters, the three selected narrations underline the importance of friendship, the questioning of authority and the need to overcome certain tests in order to prove they are not children anymore. However, the three of them choose to connect the teenage characters, the teacher roles and the school's goals in a very different way.

In «Física o Química», the teenage characters are defined mainly by their physical beauty and their trendy appearance: if previous seasons presented certain characters with a more natural look, in this one they all conform to highly sophisticated standards of advertising beauty (as in the case of Paula, who appears with an outstandingly new slim figure and top model hairstyle and make-up precisely when she has just become a teenage mother).

Triumph is identified with moments when the characters reinforce their friendship, confront adults or find situations of special connection with empathic and attractive teachers, mainly in emotional conflicts and intrigue (in previous seasons the series contained several subplots of sexual tension or even sexual relations between students and teachers). No important goals associated with learning and intellectual effort are highlighted; despite the character of Alba showing considerable ambition with regard to her studies, this

soon takes a negative twist in the story since she mixes it with Machiavellian procedures such as blackmail and intimidation. And even when main characters must overcome important challenges connected with crucial and current social problems –such as teenage motherhood, homophobia, anorexia or teenage suicide– these are rarely linked to the need for learning and reflection; as a matter of fact, these problems acquire a certain touch of confusing heroism by always being

Media Literacy may help teenagers to understand the factors that determine certain narrative decisions that are taken due to expressive or commercial needs even if the portrayal of certain realities gets distorted. The contrast between these cases and other solutions that manage to preserve educational goals may strongly support such a process of understanding; this is the case of «The Class» and «Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix», both created by authors with a deep knowledge of adolescents' educational reality and needs, and both oriented to connecting to the explicit attention given to the importance of learning as a crucial tool for the transition towards adult life.

presented at the core of romantic subplots, as a narrative preparation for emotional rewards according to melodramatic soap opera techniques.

On the other hand, the other two narrations chose to present the way students and teachers face problems (also connected to important social issues) by underlining in an explicit way that such problems can only be resolved by the use of their mature thinking and skills: in both examples, teenagers must use what they have learned from their best educators in order to solve the crucial conflicts in the plot.

Both narrations denounce unfair or arbitrary teachers (including episodes of sporadic anger and loss of patience) and highlight the figure of the good educator as a role that presents the following main features: he or she brings together empathy and authority, is deeply convinced of the power and values of education as

tools that will help students to have a better life, and puts huge effort into the educational task even when important personal sacrifices (as shown in the cases of François and Dumbledore) may be involved.

3.4. Changes or discoveries that come as a result of the adventure

The three narrations choose to close their plots by maintaining a strong sense of uncertainty about the future: three open endings which, once more, highlight notable differences between each. «Física o Química» chooses to tie together a number of romantic reconciliations that follow standard recipes of television melodrama (the attempted suicide of one of the teenagers gives him a certain heroic dimension, one of the girls runs away from her family home and that helps her to make up with her ex-boyfriend, an improvised teen wedding is cancelled at the very last minute when the true love of one of the fiancés bounces into the ceremony begging for everything to stop...); the last chapter of the season finishes in a roadside bar where the teenagers toast the happy endings and explicitly decide to leave «for another moment» any reflection on the consequences of their behaviour and decisions. In «The Class», François closes the school year in a state of restlessness that is very similar to the one he had when the year started, especially because a very respectful and timid student has sadly confessed to him that she is leaving school without having learned anything at all. On the other hand, the narration also shows a warm feeling of optimism in the last sequence of the football match between the students and teachers, and a final session where each student shares with the group the most interesting thing that they have learned during the year. From a near-narrative approach, Harry Potter and his friends get to overcome extremely difficult obstacles in the face of fear and darkness while still maintaining a strong attitude of watchfulness and determination: they need to keep on breaking through an increasingly uncertain time where every single piece of knowledge and competence learned will be essential in order to survive.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The classic scheme of narratological analysis used to examine these three examples has helped to reveal some meaningful issues on the media representation of teenage identity, such as features of personality, the questioning of authority, uncertainty about change, couple and friendship relationships and the difficulties that are linked to new possibilities of freedom and choice. For this reason, the three cases may be used as

interesting educational tools oriented to supporting debate and reflection about the fundamental tasks to be carried out during this period of life: through their shared analysis they may all become aware of those features of the characters that teenagers admire as values to be identified with, while other features, in contrast, are actually obstacles to preventing such awareness. These narrations may also represent an excellent resource for Media Literacy with teenagers due to their connection with the biggest issue that adolescents care about as media users (as consumers of media representations and social webs): their own identity building. The use of these analyses and schemes that are familiar to them from school work in traditional subjects such as Literature can support teachers in their adaptation of new Literacy activities to their current academic approach and program as suggested by UNESCO (2011).

The common features shared by the three narrations add meaningful aspects to the analysis of their differences. When the plot is located in the school centre mainly to support intrigue concerning underage characters or to advertise certain trends oriented to young consumers, the narration is based on stereotyped representations following the previous tendencies of commercially successful teenage television dramas (Guarinos, 2009), mainly representing a confusing present focused on consumption and almost never concerned about the complex reality of young students. The three narrations selected (all of them very successful in their different contexts) achieve this partly by the way they portray social issues (like uncertainty about the future, for instance) that the audiences recognize as their own (Corroy, 2008). But, as the influence of reality on fiction can also happen the other way, these narrations can also act in the contrary sense: they may strongly inspire young audiences by moving them to reproduce in their own lives what they have seen on the screen even if reality has been deeply distorted for artistic reasons or commercial needs.

This process of imitation may lead to the identification of features and behaviour that may be presented in fiction as positive but which in real life would be identified as signs of dangerous problems: this is the case with an excessive tendency to focus only on the present (and reject facing the future), a social issue detected in teenagers who have problems establishing positive links with school and who spend too much time consuming television (Díaz-Aguado & al., 2011; Martín-Serrano & Velarde, 2001). As proposed by Clarembeaux (2010), Media Literacy may help teenagers to understand the factors that determine certain

narrative decisions that are taken due to expressive or commercial needs even if the portrayal of certain realities gets distorted. The contrast between these cases and other solutions that manage to preserve educational goals may strongly support such a process of understanding; this is the case of «The Class» and «Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix», both created by authors with a deep knowledge of adolescents' educational reality and needs, and both oriented to connecting to the explicit attention given to the importance of learning as a crucial tool for the transition towards adult life.

As proposed by UNESCO (2011), this analysis shows the efficacy of educational activities based on a comparison between different sorts of narration, including cases of notable success among teenage audiences (such as the series «Física o Química» or the film «Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix») and also independent productions like «The Class»), focusing on school goals by means of a realistic, even documentary, approach that may help adolescents to understand in a deeper way what the real perspective of those who care about their education is.

The three narrations analysed may support the work of Media Literacy with teenagers by providing training on three important competences underlined by Clarembaux (2011): 1) the detection of content and patterns which, coming from screens, may exert a strong influence on adolescents, becoming a reference source of models to imitate; 2) the differentiation of the positive and negative features of such reference patterns according to the values that teenagers really want to incorporate in their identity building; and 3) the elaboration of new proposals and alternatives to those possible influences finally seen as negative, as empowered and active media consumers and authors of their own screenplay of behaviour and expression. In line with this, as a continuation of the work presented here, the following model of Media Literacy is to be tested and included in broader programs of education on values (Díaz-Aguado & Falcón, 2006):

1) Activating previous schemes by asking teenagers about their relation to the narrations presented and by giving them the role of experts on media.

2) Presenting content and aesthetic approaches by analyzing contrasting examples.

3) Encouraging debate in heterogenic groups (4-6 students) about how teenagers and schools are represented in each narration.

4) Helping teenagers to create their own media narrations on the role of school in the building of their own futures.

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