



Media Education Practices

**Media Literacy to Young Poor in Nicaragua.
Working on a Model of Empowerment and Employability for
Social Change. First Results**

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Abstract: The research aims to present the preliminary results of a case study on the MLSC project (Media Literacy for Social Change) applied in some of the poorest communities in Nicaragua. Study results show how young people improve their employability, getting jobs commensurate with their training, and driving social change in their communities thanks to training on media literacy proficiency. This case study focuses on collecting the voices of both participants and related institutions. The first results obtained confirm that this case study observes the main bases of building a model of media literacy focused on social change in order to promote empowerment and employability in poor communities.

Keywords: media literacy, social change, empowerment, education, development.

1. Introduction

Media literacy is understood as a right of all citizens (Area, 2012). The training in media literacy connects the educational and communicative domains, resulting the edu-communication a necessary resource in the configuration of a prosumer society (García-Ruiz et al, 2014). The term “prosumer “ was initially mentioned in the seventies by McLuhan (McLuhan & Nevitt, 1972), and its dimensions have been evolving continuously until the appearance of spheres of social networks, linking coincidence and strengthened its framework to strengthen the convergence of traditional media and new media (Sánchez & Contreras, 2012).

Researchers from the Research and Social Change Centre at the University of Queensland in Australia, define communication for social change as the intentional communication that is used to perform some form of sustainable change in societies- on its values and structures- leading to a qualitative change in the life

chances of a community. According to these experts the social change is not exclusively tied to the former paradigms of economic development, yet social change is also brought to life through other ways in which societies evolve. We refer to social change when the features and ways of expression of a society, as well as the relationships between individuals or the way in which they are involved in it, become altered. Users create digital content as a way to communicate and participate in the society, being this "a social phenomenon with social implications" as stated by Wunsch -Vincent and Vickery (2007, p.35).

The use of accessible media and technology is one of the key elements in the consecution of effective media literacy and especially in the emergence of a social change. Technological development has led to new forms of exclusion, the digital divide. The difficulties of access to technological infrastructure, insufficient training and the use of ICT or absence of references and support are some of the causes for this digital exclusion (Soto & Fernández, 2003). Digital inclusion efforts should be made to ensure access to new technologies by taking on, implementing and promoting accessibility standards and guidelines, as well as through training and education (De la Fuente & Hernández-Galán, 2014).

Media competence is multidimensional and requires a broad perspective, based on well-developed foundational knowledge. It is not a fixed category: theoretically, one can raise his/her media competence level, by perceiving, interpreting, and analyzing cognitive, emotional, aesthetic and ethical media information (Fedorov & Levitskaya, 2015). We are therefore witnessing the birth of a good citizen or his good citizenship, who once acquires the media competence, becomes an agent of social change (Mihailidis & Thenevin, 2013).

2. *Nica Project*. Model of Media Literacy focused on Social Change

The use, in the processes of media literacy, of accessible (or reachable) media technology is mandatory in countries like Nicaragua, where the 91% of schools don't have a computer classroom or the 60% of rural schools don't have electricity access (Näslund-Hadley et al, 2012).

This research is an example of how the youth participation through communication and technology benefits the social change. It shows a constructivist view as the one proposed by Bers (2010) under the name PTD: Positive Technological Development, inspired by the Positive Youth Development (PYD), by Papert (1980). He states that the activities related to the technology and the media literacy should not be taken simply as a task or as a means for youth to develop their interactive projects, yet as an opportunity to make the world a better place. This assumption is based on two pillars: on the one hand there is the design of programs to assess the use of technology, which is based on psycho - educational settings that encourage young people to use it in a positive way. On the

other hand and among other aspects, there is the personal contribution of those who will make a better society through their moral values.

From August 2011 to February 2014, with the support and funding of the University of Salamanca (USAL), the government of Castilla y León, Action Against Hunger-Central America (ACH-C), the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), and the collaboration of Nicaraguan institutions, several phases of the project took place: "Training, education and innovation in audiovisual media to raise awareness of hunger in Nicaragua" (<http://proyectoennicaragua.wix.com/proyecto-audiovisual-nicaragua>). This initiative was integrated in a European Union grant, within the Food Security Thematic Program Europe Aid. The aim was gain knowledge about hunger and food, using innovative methodologies to strengthen local institutions and its technical capacities, and sensitize public opinion towards articulate synergisms between local actions and public policies for food security and sovereignty.

Media literacy is shaping up to be an emerging topic at the intersection of field of communication and education (Hobbs, 2005). This project acted in the interests of the Nicaraguan youth without financial resources, in urban as well as rural areas, with the aim of eradicating audiovisual and media illiteracy, using accessible technologies, becoming aware of food security, and thanks to this specialized training, becoming agents of local development and improving their career prospects.

This training was essentially carried out in intensive courses in Managua in various phases, which involved 30 participants selected by local partner institutions. The training focused on proficiency of video production and editing, networks, radio and graphic editing with accessible audiovisual technology, available to the communities.

2.2. Methodology and first results

In this article, we present the preliminary results obtained from in-depth interviews with both participants in the training, and the representatives of the collaborated institutions, in order to analyze this project such a case study. We carried out 32 interviews, 21 with participants and 11 from institutions. The participant's interviews had 39 questions, and the institution's interviews had 31. These in-depth interviews used closed and open questions to valorize and organize the results obtained.

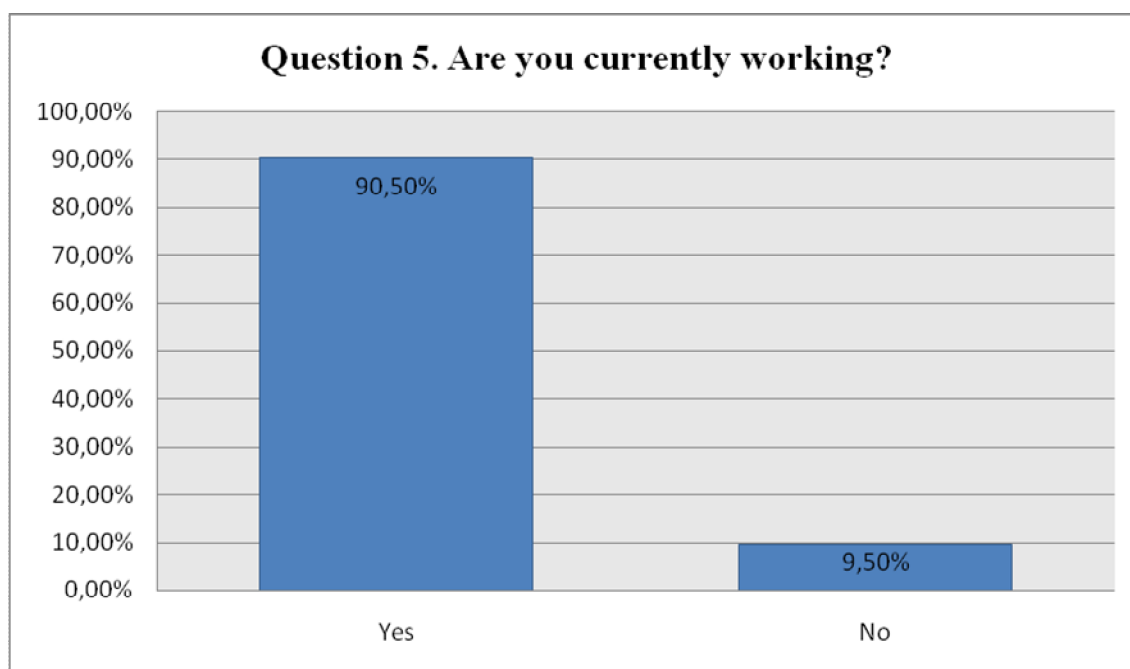
Currently, we are working on the systematization of responses obtained in the in-depth interviews, with the aim of establishing a line of work for the creation of a model of media literacy focused on social change in order to promote empowerment and employability in poor communities.

As a result, the integration of most of these young people who went through the training into the labor market as audiovisual communication professionals stands out. But we also wanted to assess others issues, such as:

- The usefulness and efficiency level of this training not only in improving the employability and empowerment of young people, but also in improving their family economic situation.
- The level reached in media literacy and the use of media literacy and technologies as a tool for empowerment and social change in the communities.
- The adequacy of creating a training model based on this experience, which could be implemented in other social realities.

The first results obtained of the analysis of the participant's in-depth interviews confirm some of the targets, especially those related to improvement of personal and family economic situation of participants. We highlight by the following graphs, the most valued results obtained after the analysis of the participant's responses.

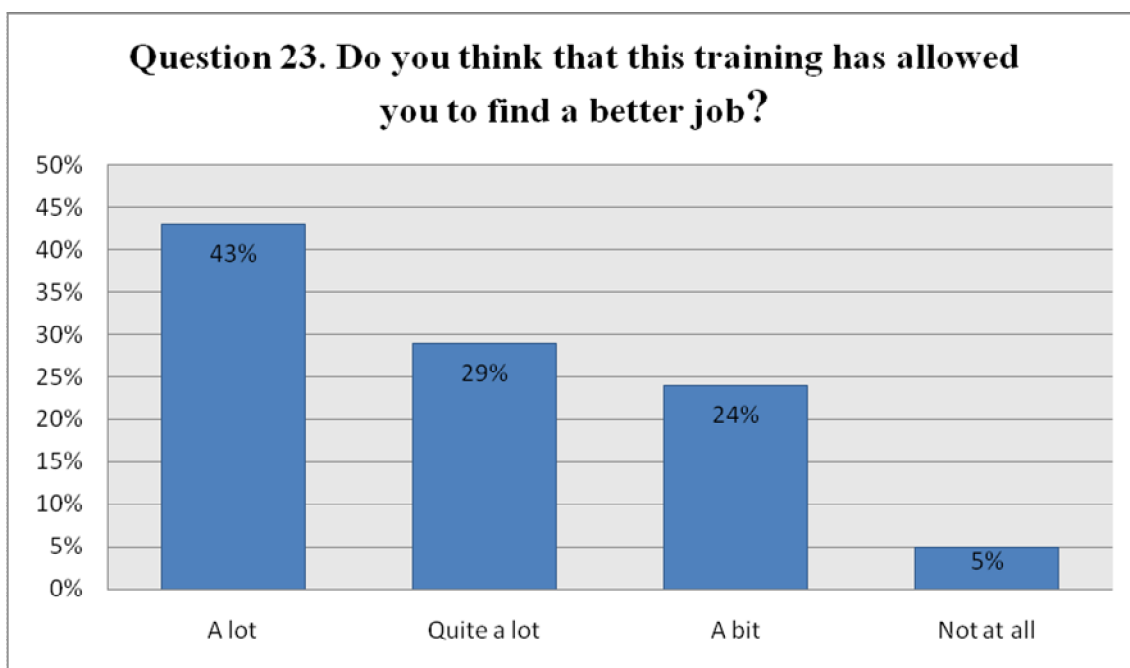
Graph 1



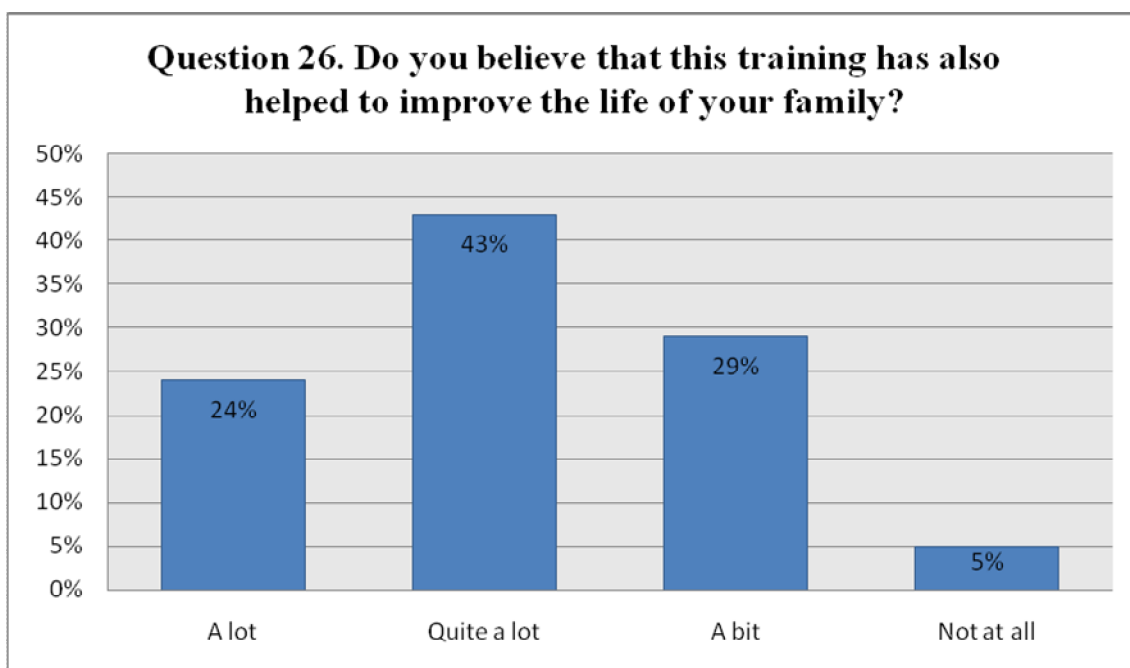
Of these 90.5%, 80.9% of interviewees currently work in a job related to communication and/or media. As examples, we highlight the case of Odubert Guevara, 23 year old from Somoto, current Dircom Radio Sandino and filmmaker; Gema Zapata from Ocotal, 24 years old, filmmaker who shoots almost lost indigenous and ecological agricultural techniques to show it in poor communities

to fight hunger and preserve the indigene culture. And finally Elder García, 27 years old, journalist in radio, television and administration of social networks.

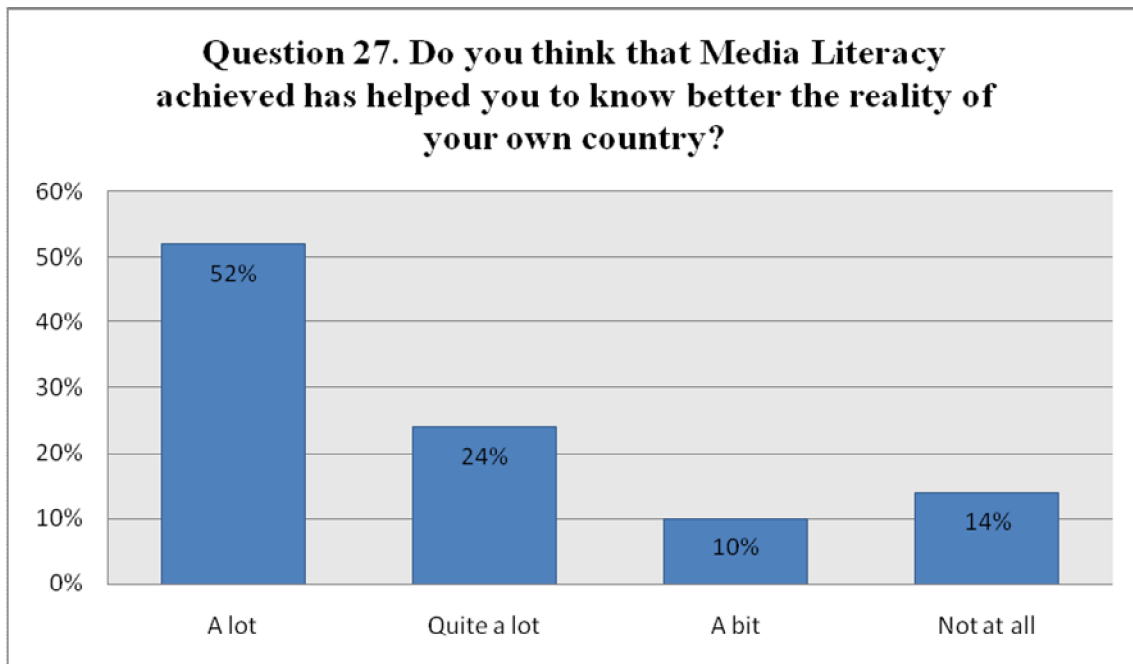
Graph 2



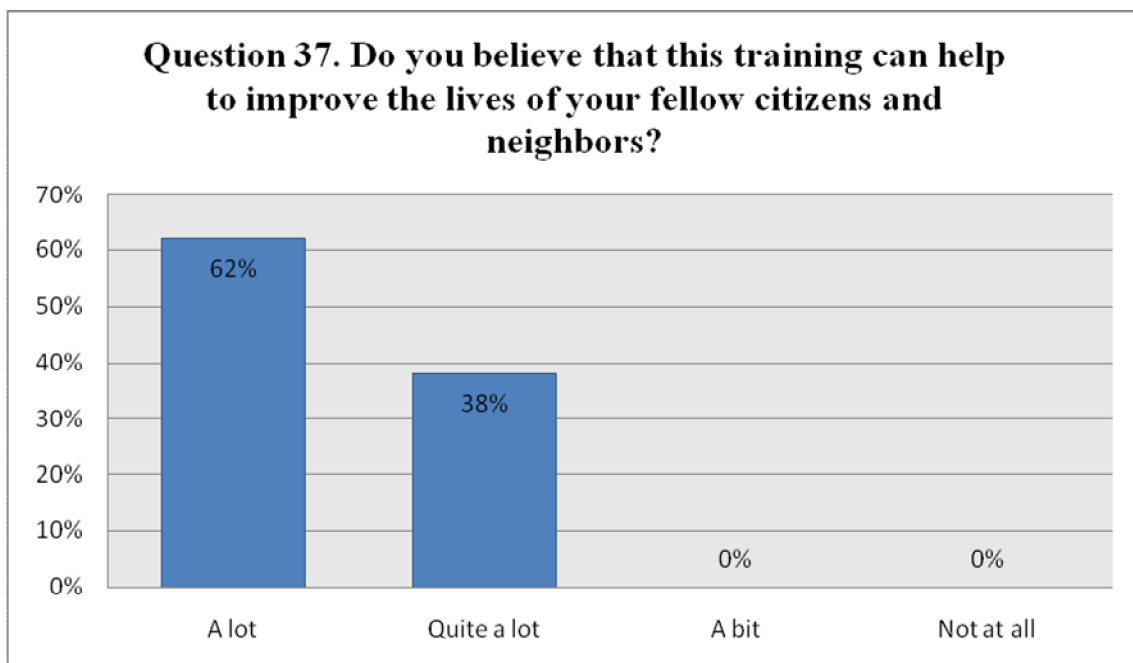
Graph 3



Graph 4



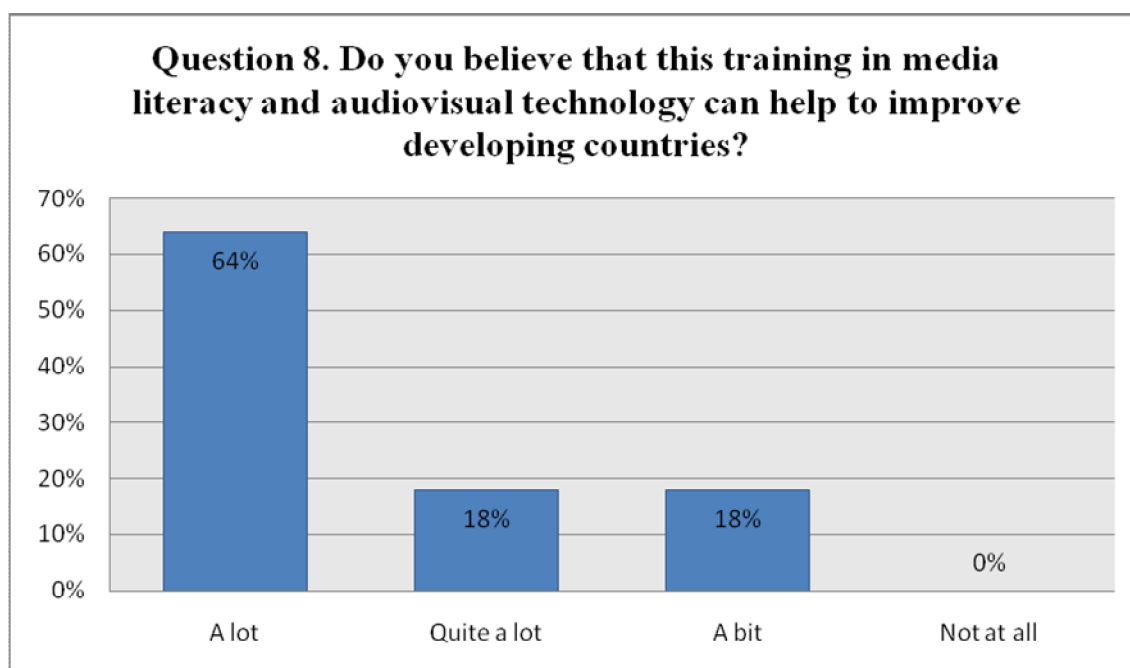
Graph 5



Finally, we have begun to analyze the data obtained from 11 in-depth interviews to responsible for institutions participating in this project, although this

analysis is in its initial phase, we highlight the responses obtained in question number 8 and 22:

Graph 6



In question number 22 in which we asked about the real possibility of this training to be export to other social realities, 100% of responsible for the institutions believed that this training model is able to be applied to other different cultural society and/or countries.

3. Conclusion

The overall aim of the training, as well as other actions linked to this initiative, was the acquisition of professional knowledge in audiovisual technologies and the Web –Media Literacy-. The training should also improve their employability in a particularly unstable country, and finally, to benefit their communities trying to raise awareness about hunger and food. In summary, the strengthening of the use by these communities of social networks and audiovisual technologies for social change, molding these young people into spokespersons for their communities, empowering them to develop future communication projects.

The first results of the interviews analyzed as well as the data collected in the field in Nicaragua and will be incorporated into this study in due course, seem to confirm that the creation of a model of media literacy focused on social change in order to promote empowerment and employability in poor communities is possible. The first analysis of data indicates that this case study observes the main bases of building a model of media literacy; in summary, thanks to specific training of video, radio, networks and layout editing for social change, these young

Nicaraguan people have become spokespersons for their communities, empowering them to develop future communication projects and greatly improving the socioeconomic status of them and their families.

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