

Emerging and Transformative Narratives on Inclusive Education through Documentary Cinema

Abstract

The documentary piece presented has been created to promote educational inclusion and social change by showing, analyzing and promoting the activism of people with disabilities and their environment. The choice of documentary cinema as an audiovisual format responds to its faculty as an instrument of visibility, denunciation and social transformation. This allows us to show through various narratives a process of struggle to make the right to inclusive education effective, provoking a critical and active attitude from the viewer, who can take a position before a social movement that needs to take shape.

Objectives or purposes

The purpose of this session is to show the value of documentary cinema as a research tool that enables the analysis, denunciation, visibility and transformation of social, political and educational problems. To do this, a documentary piece constructed together with Chilean filmmaker Cecilia Barriga is presented within the framework of the research project “Emerging Narratives on the Inclusive School from the Social Model of Disability. Resistance, resilience and social change” (RTI2018-099218-A-I00), developed at the University of Malaga (Spain), and financed with European funds and by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities of Spain. The documentary aims to promote inclusive education and social change by showing the activism of people with disabilities and their environments. It seeks to identify, build and promote new narratives about disability and schools emanating from people involved in the recognition of human rights.

Perspective(s) or theoretical framework

The origins of documentary cinema date back to the end of the 19th century, and in 1926, John Grierson used the concept of documentary as a noun for the first time, using it to refer to the documentary value of the film *Mohana*, by Robert J. Flaherty, for many creators of ethnographic cinema. Grierson believed that in order to achieve true democracy it was necessary to make up for the lack of information that citizens had on social problems, and that cinema should serve to help people understand what was happening in the world (Sellés, 2007).

The use of the documentary resource in educational research responds to the need to identify and build new paradigms and instruments capable of addressing social and educational reality in all its complexity. Current educational issues and social problems require increasingly interdisciplinary approaches capable of providing a more holistic view of reality. Politics, economics, culture, education... are intensely related and in continuous evolution, shaping complex realities that cannot be explained from simple categories. Especially in the study of oppressive realities, like disability (Abberley, 1987; Barton, 1993; Oliver, 1990; Slee, 2011; Calderón & Calderón, 2016), the research position cannot be limited to observing and registering the unjust reality, but the investigative process must be configured in a way of revealing the hidden oppressions, and a positioning together with those who experience

inequality in their bodies to transform the living conditions that corner and subordinate them. Among them are schools. For Slee and Allan (2001), ordinary schooling is a form of cultural genocide that denies the legitimacy of differences, which is why inclusion is presented as a struggle to deconstruct the exclusions that schools go through, challenging the naturalization of those inequalities, paying attention to the resistance they have to face and eliminating the existing “silencing mechanisms” in schools, so that the silenced voices can be heard as an affirmation of the struggle (Hooks, 1989).

Educational research, as defended by critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2006; Apple, 2007), must serve to remove consciences and transform realities, to generate movements political resistance, to make schools more democratic places and, above all, to humanize the institution and the reality. This humanization requires the development of critical thinking, an attitude of empathy and deep respect for the material and symbolic conditions in which the school institution and educational processes are installed in a capitalist society. The action of research responds to an exercise of ethical-political involvement. This means that we have to make an important effort to also transform the social relations of research production (Oliver, 2008), recognizing the value of the knowledge that is generated in daily life from the research subjects, which questions the proper forms of academic construction of knowledge, regulation of subjectivities developed by institutions such as schools. In short, we must question our way of positioning ourselves before the reality we study. From this emancipatory paradigm, the object of study is precisely the reconstruction of our relationships.

Documentary cinema is presented as a really valuable tool for this task, since it is a way of producing knowledge that allows the viewer to be informed about a specific social or educational problem, and teaches them what is transformed and how it is transformed (Breschand, 2004). This genre is shown as a more or less faithful reflection of the fragment of history of the moment that is recounted (Juncosa and Romaguera, 1997). The documentary confronts us with aspects of reality, past or present, which sometimes causes us rejection, and invites us to commit ourselves to its transformation.

Methods, techniques, or modes of inquiry

In the process of preparing this documentary piece, families, researchers and the filmmaker have carried out exhaustive research, approaching the object of study through bibliographic and audiovisual inquiry, observation, dialogical encounters (virtual and face-to-face), collective construction , biographical construction and key informant interviews. To build a framework of meaning, the team had to select the protagonists of the story, reflect on the place they occupied in it, and define significant places, all in continuous negotiation with the protagonists, who became part of the team of investigation.

Data sources, evidence, objects or materials

During our presentation we will show the different phases of elaboration of this artistic creation, whose documentary work has been shared by the filmmaker and the research team (made up of families and professionals involved in respecting the right to an inclusive education). From the beginning, various meetings were organized to familiarize the

filmmaker Cecilia Barriga with the stories of resistance and resilience of the main protagonists, and to establish a dialogue that would allow identifying and defining the objectives that the documentary should pursue, as well as the reflections that they should underlay. In addition to the filming, audiovisual resources previously generated by the entire group of people behind the audiovisual piece were used: workshops, scientific meetings, state conversations between the educational community, work groups, participatory Action Research processes, biographical interviews, observations, assemblies, focus groups, personal and daily records, collaborative constructions, blog entries, publications in the press and television... A whole range of information collection strategies, processes of construction of new narratives and actions aimed at transforming the daily life.

The documentary tries to show all this series of narratives that respond to the construction of a movement to fight in defense of the rights of minors with disabilities in schools. One of the most significant narratives is the one starring Rubén Calleja and his family, based on their battle against school discrimination suffered by this young man because of his disability. In 2009, this family based in Leon, a region located in the north of Spain, filed their first complaint against the Spanish State in defense of their son's right to be enrolled in an ordinary educational center. In 2020 the Calleja family obtained a historical sentence, from which the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2020) ruled that the Spanish State had violated Rubén's rights by removing him from the school in which he had been schooled up to eleven years and force him to go to a special education center. This ruling also obliged the Spanish State to compensate the family and guarantee that Rubén could go to an ordinary center to study VET, and it served for the Committee to launch a series of recommendations aimed at eliminating all forms of educational segregation of students with disabilities.

Around this central biographical story, chosen among the group of activists, there is an entire movement, still too silenced, of professionals, families and students who have been building new logics and actions to confront disability in schools, and to call for a strong social movement that aligns itself with other groups in an intersectional struggle to democratize education. And beyond the production of the documentary, there is a whole process that implies the empowerment of the group involved.

Results and/or conclusions or warrants for arguments/point of view

The social imaginary built around disability and diversity has marked the lives of many families, causing suffering and a strong feeling of loneliness. The schools have been complicit in the construction of this imaginary, taking refuge for it in certain educational policies that have allowed to justify numerous situations of discrimination and social exclusion. In this sense, the making of the documentary, in addition to making visible the daily reality faced by boys and girls with disabilities and by their families, has meant a "healing" for them: it has allowed them to share experiences, find support, recognize fissures in the oppressing system and empower themselves. In short, this particular "healing" has consisted in recognizing and showing that the substance of the issue does not lie in the medical and individual component of disability, but in the political nature that constructs and maintains the current interpretation of the differences that prevail in our societies and schools.

For the families involved, the fact of recalling their stories has allowed them to take stock of their achievements, and to recognize a social narrative of what has happened to them: the one they have experienced, but also the one that precedes them and the one they now contribute to generate. A process that, being eminently social and political, faces in community the feeling of loneliness that often invades them. In this way, the documentary piece begins a movement generated by people who are united by a common interest: making our societies more inclusive, starting with our schools.

Scientific or scholarly significance of the study or work

The documentary is an instrument of great artistic value that offers the possibility of transcending the narratives of the protagonists themselves, and generating other possible ones from the gaze of whoever observes as spectator. Likewise, these spectators are no longer considered as mere observers but are invited to be part of that transformative movement.

This proposal reflects the possibilities of documentary cinema as a source of research and social transformation, highlighting the need to build new collective imaginaries about inclusive education, capable of permeating educational policies and institutions in order to promote coexistence in a diverse society.

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