

## **The production of documentary as teaching material for basic education**

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### **Abstract**

*Nowadays it is unquestionable that audiovisual has become a widely used tool for the development of knowledge in the classroom. Based on this assumption, the research that I have developed aims to produce documentaries as helping diffuser product and content for students of Basic Education and also as a form of training, put graduate students to deepen the practices developed in the classroom. The audiovisual aid that will be developed is the documentary which will be the matrix for the development of teaching material that fits the process of cognition between teachers and students. This will be achieved through the interaction between University and Basic Education Institutions and will include the involvement of teachers and students. The activity is of extension and social order and aims to promote integration between the University and the Basic Education Institutions for the development of teaching materials.*

**Keywords:** Documentary; audiovisual; educational materials; interaction.

### **1. Introduction**

Based on experiments in the area of Social Communication as a university professor in disciplines involving the audiovisual discourse as news and informative elements, I realized that activities in the classroom could expand and move to a heading of educational content composition that could be used as support for the enrichment of education. This concern arose when a group of students produced a documentary on the theme "Bonete, a lost paradise" that addressed customs and habits of a community located on the coast of São Paulo. It is an ethnographic view that focused on awareness of the importance of preserving the culture of this fishing community. The documentary showed a profile of the routine of a group of people that fight for survival through fishing. This documentary material, made me consider that the University could expand their extension activities for schools of basic education, as a provider of content through audiovisual products in a didactic line, that is, to develop products that would help as a tool in the process of education.

However, this extension process would also have the integration between university and basic education institutions, leading teachers and students to carry out an integrated project involving both institutions. In this sense, graduate students of Journalism and Liberal Arts courses would participate as content producers covering the areas of History, Science, Citizenship, Sociology, Anthropology, Arts and Health.

The audiovisual product revealed with this experiment is the documentary that will be the form of knowledge production related to issues that are relevant to the main themes of each subject. Thus, as Paulo Freire said, the documentary is a way for the study. "Consider, for example, the extraordinary advantage that today's historians – who rely on documentary films of historical facts – have on yesterday's historians. [...] Today this form of documentation offers the historian an extraordinary instrument to understand his studies. "[1]

The documentary is a filming genre that allows, through projects of creative and experimental actions, the composition of educational contents with appropriate language to the cognitive needs of students who attend Basic Education.

Thus, all the documentary composition process, as teaching material, would be interconnected with the participation of teachers and students from University and Basic Education. Therefore, the construction of content goes through a process of interaction at both levels of education that would provide the performance of activities and practical exercises, for college students, and theoretical material for students of Basic Education.

## 2. Development

The documentary is a filming genre that has been presented in classrooms at all levels of education as a helping tool for cognitive development of the student body. However, the use of a particular documentary must be completely articulated to the reality of the particular subject program content and, therefore, a whole process of preparing and structuring must be linked interactively with the institutions concerned with the production of this teaching material. Thus, the preparation of the documentary must be directed to a broad learning process that would involve a team consisting of teachers, professionals in the audiovisual area and students interested in putting this activity into practice. Despite being a didactic material the production of the documentary would not be linked to any subject of Journalism and Language and Literature courses not to be contaminated by methods and concepts that act as evaluative elements to the student. It would indeed be an autonomous form of evaluation related to a particular group of University extension that works with social activities.

For the viability of the process it would be necessary to have the implantation of an adequate infrastructure to carry out all activities for the realization of this production task. Besides physical space and the composition of people involved, the University would provide audiovisual equipment for holding all the documentary production process. Regarding the people who will participate in all the development of the audiovisual piece, one should think of an asset with members that have a commitment to the success of the project so that it can be accomplished well. Some members would be effective for the management of the entire process, and others would participate as advisers invited to perform a certain documentary. Thus, the effective staff would count on the participation of two teachers from the Journalism area, two from Languages and Literature and six students from University. The invited members would be Basic Education teachers who accompany the entire making of the documentary as advisers. Some students of Basic Education also follow the production as a way of learning. An important point to consider is that the audiovisual product is performed by a collective work process, that is, each member does his part and moves to the next to make progress in the process. This way all operational methodology has to be well planned, which means that each member has to know exactly what he has to develop for the success of the project. The team would receive a compositional constitution formed by coordinators, advisers, producers and technical team. The functional organization chart would look like this:

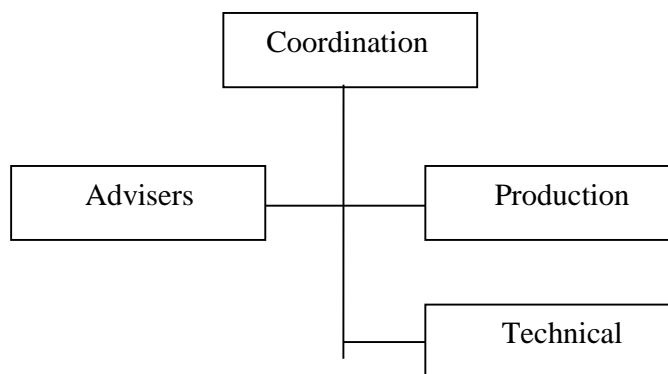


Figure 01: Activity chart

The ones responsible for coordination must have a deep knowledge in audiovisual language as they will have the task of managing the planning stages, pre-production, production and post-production. In that case, a professor of journalism course would be responsible. Also included in the coordination, to perform the script process, construction of narrative and discourse analysis, a professor connected directly to the area of Languages. The team of advisers would be composed of basic education teachers who would help in the planning process, which includes the preparation of the script, and providing advice on the content that will constitute the documentary narrative. Other important contributors would be college students who would put all the planning and production into practice. Along with the college students, students of Basic Education would participate in the process as apprentices.

This way the whole process for developing the documentary as teaching material would involve a wide learning process for all this large number of people involved. As for the teachers, updating about the topic and methodology, which would apply to every situation in the development of the product, would involve them in the production of research for the content. As for the students, besides participating in the research, they would be putting elements learned in their courses into practice, in addition to developing new techniques through practice. All this experiment would be successful within educational contexts that would put teachers and students in research, reflection and interpretation positions.

### **3. The Documentary as a content source**

In Brazil, former President Getúlio Vargas created in 1936 the National Institute of Educational Cinema (INCE) to produce educational films to be distributed in schools around the country. The INCE acted for thirty years and was a landmark by setting up a new perspective on teaching in the classroom. The traditional way of teaching, taught by teacher's explanation, books and photographs, received the support of film language as a way of spreading content. INCE conducted more than 400 educational films and documentaries mostly in short-feature movie. Thus, the documentary is a tool for research and materials for teaching to be respected as a representative documentation of historical and scientific facts originated through investigative and experimental work.

The documentary is a film genre and had as its starting point the film *Nanook of the North* of the American filmmaker Robert Flaherty. According to Barbosa and Cunha, "*Nanook of the North* was the first film to which we applied the term documentary, coined by John Grierson, British filmmaker in the 1930s who defended the creation of a specific film genre, concerned about the representation of reality. Flaherty was an amateur filmmaker and traveler, exactly the kind of job profile from which modern scientific anthropology wanted to keep distance from in this period of consolidation of new paradigms in the subject." [2]

The documentary shows a representation of Nanook's (an Eskimo) and his family's way of life, in the Bay of Hudson. The documentary was launched in 1922 and presented to the public this family's hard fight to survive in a Canadian region surrounded by the Arctic Circle. However, Flaherty's documentary is known to have been scripted and performed so that he could portray a representation of the reality experienced by Nanook's ancestors. By the time it was shot, Nanook's people already used equipment for hunting brought by white merchants. It was obvious that the white man's culture had changed the traditions of the Eskimos and this is emphasized at the beginning of the documentary. Barter was a form of trading goods, white merchant exchanged weapons and tools for skins of foxes and bears that later were sold in Europe. With these facts, Flaherty would not portray the primitive essence of survival of these Eskimos. So he decided to script the documentary creating situations experienced by Nannok ancestors. Thus, they used fictional movie elements such as direction of scenes, scenarios (igloo) and the use of native characters to build a family to Nannok since he was single.

Despite the fictional elements, *Nannok of the North* is considered the first documentary in film history. Its originality as a documentary is linked directly to the reconstitution process, often used in documentaries that portray historical facts. So, according to Ramos, "as it proposes to establish assertions about the historical world,

the documentary will be dealing directly with the reconstruction and interpretation of a fact that in the past, had the intensity of the present." [3] This form of documentary does not lose credibility because it is based on research in most diverse areas. Thus, if the documentary deals with the reconstruction and interpretation of a certain fact, its characteristic is the prevailing fact for the production of educational materials for schools. On the issue of the documentary *Nanook of the North*, reconstitution was the tool that was found by Flaherty for the construction of a narrative composed of values and parameters for understanding how the ancestors of the Eskimos lived without the cultural influence of the white man.

Another question about the documentary is related to the feeling of veracity that this genre has built, through its own history. What is being shown has realistic origin due to register through image and sound. According to Nichols, "the documentary tradition is deeply rooted in its ability to transmit an authenticity impression. This is a strong impression. It began with the rough film image and the appearance of movement: despite the poverty of the image and the difference compared to the photographed thing, the appearance of movement remained indistinguishable from the real movement. " [4] However, the documentary is not only an evaluative image product but also, similarly, highlights sound elements in its aesthetic and discursive composition. Due to this, the documentary consists of a language that reaches the viewer through auditory and visual sensory perceptions that are intertwined by means of codes to transmit a certain message.

#### **4. Planning of didactic documentary**

The production of a documentary for educational purposes demands planning for the whole implementation process to achieve its expectations and goals with excellence and quality. The organization of the entire pre-production, production and post-production, must be planned and organized to avoid obstacles that may hinder any stage of the process. However, before any planning, the University should have some links, or partnership, with some Basic Education institution that is interested in participating in the realization of educational material in the documentary format.

After the partnership a team should be established as working group to assess the needs that the development of the documentary will require. In a first meeting the teachers of the University, responsible for coordination, should develop a process of working with teachers of Basic Education, advisers, to determine the content of the documentary and how it should be approached. With this information, the working group will determine a research process that will identify elements for the composition of the documentary approach. At that stage, the participation of advisers is the most important, because, within that group, there should be the presence of teachers, specialists on the topic discussed. So with the content of results of the research, the working group will have the necessary basis for the elaboration of a first draft of the script.

Although most documentaries do not have a finished script, the didactic documentaries allow the elaboration of a script for being a product that hardly find factual actions that may interfere with the process. According to Puccini, "Historical, biographical, or file documentary that deals with past events, can be very well written before filming begins." [5] Therefore, it is essential that, at that stage, the coordinator from the Language Course and advisers meet the producers to write the first draft of the script and then the final product.

After approval of the script, coordinators, advisers and producers will conduct a thorough technical reading, that is, page by page, and scene by scene, to survey all the necessities for the accomplishment of the project. Everything must be reported in a pre-production map, including the distribution of tasks for the ones who are responsible. In fact, this map shows the needs and measures that will be taken before the production steps. Thus, all kinds of necessary documentation, such as statements, contracts, permits for filming in certain locations must be reported to be provided in the pre-production process. The use of outdoor and studio should also be on the list of measures together with the transport and equipment needs. The list is fundamental and its content is related to the dimension of the final product.

## 5. The production of the documentary

After the planning phase, we begin the pre-production phase which is the first step in the production of the documentary. The production team will receive a list of tasks properly connected to a schedule to be followed rigidly so that the goals are met in the pre-set deadline. According to Marques, "pre-production is roughly the period in which everything must be prepared, negotiated, studied for the camera to start and the film is carried out with a minimum margin of unexpected events". [6] In this phase, the team will contact all people who will participate as sources of information and set dates for the interviews. Another measure is related to external locations and studios in documentation issues and scheduling.

However, it is in this pre-production phase that the students, the technical team, will have workshops on audiovisual language. These workshops should provide instructions on frameworks, movements and camera positioning that are to be used in generating the documentary. The students of Basic Education will also have the same learning, however, to work on the realization of a *making-of* to record the entire process.

After all the arrangements were made, the technical team will start work. They will hold all the pictures and sound capture process. It is the stage where the documentary will be made and will test all the planning and pre-production. In this sense, the team of producers will also participate in this phase to ensure the smooth progress of production. Producers will now assist at the time of the recordings as *plateau* producers to be responsible for equipment, moving of technical staff, rent, food, reception of the characters, etc. They will provide everything for the technical team to perform the recordings safely and accurately. All members of the technical staff should have a clear idea of what will be done and work together with the *plateau* producers during the recording.

Finally, there is the phase of post-production in which all the captured material will be analyzed and cut to be delivered to the technical team that will perform the editing and finalization of the documentary. Here, the production team has already provided the extra material that will be part of the documentary, as archive of images, photography, animations, sound effects, music, etc. However, after completion of the documentary, it must be shown to a limited audience who will have the task of evaluating all contents.

## 6. Final Considerations

In view of the arguments presented, it is clear that the audiovisual, in the documentary genre, is a tool that can be used as a learning process in different educational levels simultaneously. Being a universal product, i.e., it covers any area of knowledge, the documentary can be a tool for diffusion of activities, theoretical and practical, for students of Basic Education and the University.

Integration is the matrix that will expose the University in a socio-educational activity regarding the production of content that may be used as a teaching supplement in the educational institutions of our country. Thus, the interaction appears as an inter-institutional path that will promote actions that will value the cognitive processes related to the contents and production of the documentary. The entire production process is based on the plurality of knowledge from each teacher training and through the experiences developed by college students. However, Basic Education teachers actively participate with knowledge of their respective areas.

The whole process is motivational to stimulate and encourage teachers and students to diversify the production of contents and the teaching/learning process.

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