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HAVING A WEBPAGE IS NOT ENOUGH.
THE LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT
SECURITY AND DEFENCE IN THE
SCHOOL CURRICULUM

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HAVING A WEBPAGE IS NOT ENOUGH. THE LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SECURITY AND DEFENCE IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Abstract:

Although some effort has been made for the normalization of how the Armed Forces are viewed by our society, there is still a long way to go in order to include content on National Security and Defence in Secondary Education. Social networks and the web have an extraordinary capacity for communication and to widely spread information, but it is necessary to evaluate their effect and to plan a communication strategy that reaches the educational sector. It is also necessary to measure the efficacy about what has been done in this respect, to draw pupils and teachers' attention and not to waste the positive perception that our society has with regard to Military Institutions and subjects related to Security and Defence.

Keywords:

Security and Defence; secondary education; communication strategy; social networks; the assessment of results.

INTRODUCTION

There is no disagreement in the current social evaluation of the Armed Forces. There are no doubts about the appreciation shown in the periodic surveys; however, although it may seem like a contradiction, we are not able to assure that there is a real normalization on knowledge of the military institution. Analyzing the starting point, we have come a long way, but there is still much to be done. Institutional information has incorporated 2.0 technologies on their web pages, but it still has not been able to enter the classrooms. The experience with the school subject 'Educación para la Ciudadanía' (Citizenship Education) opened a specific and appropriate environment for knowledge and analysis of the role of the Armed Forces in current society. The 21st century society requires, in my opinion, that attention be given in secondary school classrooms, not only to the role of the military institution, but also the new national and international security scenario. It is time to think about whether the promotional activities offered on the Internet are sufficient to bring the military institution closer to society or if we are taking the risk of falling into complacency.

The institutional web pages have become excellent means of information. Collaboration, participation and distribution activities between the military and civilian world have multiplied. Good examples of it are the several agreements signed with Universities. It couldn't be any other way; the opposite would be to swim against the tides of technology and the times. However, there is still much work to be done. And the remaining questions refer to evaluating communicative efficiency, the necessary evaluation of the effect of social networks and generating and interacting with information to contribute to the connection with non-university educational means.



Web about the exhibition on the Pacific (<http://www.pacificoexposicion.es/>) related to social networks.

THE NEED TO MEASURE EFFICIENCY

Is the positive image that the Center for Sociological Research (CIS surveys offer enough? Are the objectives of normalizing the image of the Armed Forces by sending posters to schools achieved? Can we assure that Secondary school students (ESO and Bachillerato) know more about the military institution than when they began their studies? How is acceptance measured? How many schools ask for information? What type of schools? To which curricular areas is the information asked for linked? How are the answers measured? Are national security plans properly disseminated? Do teachers know about national plans related to national security and strategy?

When we try to answer these questions we lack reliable data. We only have general data but no precise and specific study of the evaluation of the military institution by young people, nor of the demand, state of the matter and starting point, objectives, strategy, etc. We would need a specific analysis, divided by age and level of education, that would provide information about the advances made, to understand the feelings of young people, value which educational segment is the most open and ideal, and, in short, establish and prioritize the communicative needs related to the world of young people aged between 12 and 18.

We can object that the optimism of sociological barometers makes it unnecessary to increase communication. Nothing could be further from the truth, we should not wait until there is an explicit demand, because then we would have a problem.

Félix Arteaga, analyst and main researcher at the Elcano Royal Institute, does not seem optimistic about the future and points out that “it would be very naïve to think that the need for Defence is not going to be questioned. Therefore, Defence should anticipate this by shortening the distance between it and the citizen’s common perception, improving strategic communication to explain what the Ministry of Defence is going to do regarding their wellbeing and protection in face of the circumstances and risks described in the National Security strategies”.ⁱ

I would like to add that, the economic crisis may have increased applications to join the Armed Forces –but not, however, regarding applications from women but we cannot trust external factors since an economic improvement might reverse the process.

IS DISSEMINATION EDUCATING?

The answer to this question is always the same: publishing and disseminating through a website is not enough. The information that appears on the Internet is not efficient enough, because it is not directly aimed at those who might be interested. In the case that interests us, it does not reach teachers nor does it tempt new interlocutors. The network must offer

appropriate information for the target audience which, currently, means combining content about the institution, security, Defence's current needs, risks, threats, etc., i.e., contributing directly to create a national security culture. But apart from accomplishing Defence's strategic objectives, it must be in harmony with an open and free participation web that allows the user to access and generate information.

The web, like social networks, is an excellent initiative to create open communities and to inform the schools about activities and the information that is published. But we must adapt the content, the narrative and the way of expressing communicative objectives, combining all the elements in order to reach the non-university educational sector appropriately. Finally, a tool to facilitate data collection and evaluate the impact and the effect of the communicative strategy is essential.

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Educational activities for Primary students in the Air Museum

ATTRACTING INTEREST

Communication is much more than just information and to achieve a good 2.0 communication we must know the web users' needs, observe, know the target audience and adapt to itⁱⁱ.

An interesting debate is underway in the world of informationⁱⁱⁱ regarding the need to evaluate the impact of social networks on communication. Without forsaking the security aspects exposed by César Pintado^{iv}, professor at the International Security and Defence Campus, in an opinion article recently published, we can adopt his four golden rules to improve communication:

1. Attracting interest. Avoiding our information from going unnoticed by identifying interests, publishing original and varied contents, and paying attention to the terms and the communicative style that we use.
2. Promoting user participation.
3. Creating a community: look for issues of mutual interest with the users
4. Reaching out to more people.



The Armed Forces' web includes a satisfaction survey about the portal

1. Attracting interest
 - *Attracting the teacher's interest*

History, Philosophy or Math teachers, a tutor or school counsellor can find resources in the materials provided by the Armed Forces, but they do not look up in the web or address military educational centers because they do not know what may be offered. It is a problem

of lack of knowledge, if not of prejudice. Fernando Savater^v recognized it recently in an interview published in 'Claves de razón práctica' (Practical Reasoning Keys) in an issue dedicated to the Armed Forces^{vi}.

The ideological prejudice, due to a fear of recruitment or exclusive pro-war information, the lack of knowledge is evidenced by the military institution. But even though this is inevitable, the risk of debate, dialogue and criticism is preferable to its absence amongst young people. National security, the national defence strategy and the role of the Armed Forces in the changing world of the 21st century is a topic of common interest and, like any other topic of common interest, it can generate discussion. However, an ideological debate that leads to knowledge and reflection in the classroom is always fruitful and can be a good opportunity to get to know the military institution and add intelligence and cohesion to educating our fellow citizens^{vii}.

- *Attracting the student's interest*

The lack of knowledge of most young people about the Armed Forces can even lead to hilarity: any Spanish teenager knows more about the American army because of the cinema or TV series than about our army. But this lack of knowledge affects subjects supposedly as distanced from the matter as literature: can Galdós' National Episodes be understood without a basic knowledge of the characteristics of the Spanish army? Are the *Tercios* only going to be known by Pérez Reverte's novels? Today's secondary school students do not know anything about the military institution, unless they have relatives involved. Knowledge about the Armed Forces is decisive in the study of Spanish History and its knowledge is essential for this matter, as is the need to inform about 21st century risks and threats.

Contributing to improve education and creating informed and conscious citizens about today's world involves the commitment to not removing from the curriculum information about current conflicts, the implications and risks that prevent cyber security, new security concepts and collective implications for our country and the rest of the world.

2. *Promoting user participation* through questions that raise different opinions. Current affairs offer many possibilities of creating historical or cultural debates about issues or topics that we are interested in communicating.
3. *Creating a community* by looking for topics of interest that some users can pass on to other people. Reading, films, comic books, video clips, etc. can attract recipients and create interest groups on topics such as military history, 21st century security, peace missions, military expeditions, etc.
4. *Reaching out to more people*. If teachers and students find our contents interesting they will share them and they will go viral in the classroom. To impact them we must find the common denominator between teachers, students and even parents.

In short, if national security is considered a public item of value, introducing it in the classroom is the best way of assuring that it reaches everyone and if we want to take advantage of the possibilities of social media channel, it is indispensable to adapt to the users' needs.



Educational animation activities in the Army Museum

STIMULATING INITIATIVES

The Ministry of Defence has already done part of its job. The web page of each of the forces provides links to social networks and they publish competitions, contests, dynamic activities, etc. However, the military institution is far from being the essential reference point in security, conflicts and defence topics for any teacher or student. To move forward in the relationship with the educational world, it is necessary to have presence and visibility in teachers' meeting points.

The initiatives to create communities in the educational world are already well-established and have a different impact, but the opportunity with which other countries offer social

access to educational contents from the media continues to surprise us. There are truly recommendable examples and in many of them topics related to the Armed Forces are addressed in such a natural way that, from a national perspective, it does not stop surprising us. The educational community is present in media like The Guardian's newsletter: The Guardian Teacher Network; the section Langue Française –découvrir, apprendre, enseigner– from TV5 France's or TES Connect web, and all of them offer and share content with teachers and users.

France and the UK were the first to incorporate education in their Defence pages. France has had a specific page on education and defence for a long time: Éduc@déf^{viii}. Dependant on the Ministère de la Défense, it offers, amongst other things, resources divided by educational levels, documentary resources and access to the department's official publications. However, it is still a long way from what the 21st century training society demands because it does not facilitate the creation of content or interaction.

Nevertheless, from the national portal of education professional, éducol^{ix}, one can access the section Apprentissage de la responsabilité which links to the page of the Ministère de la Défense. Once again, linking contents is the key to be visible and accessible:

- [Apprendre à vivre ensemble](#)
- [Éducation à la sécurité](#)
- [Éducation à la sécurité routière](#)
- [Éducation à la santé](#)
- [Éducation à la défense](#)

The UK page also dedicates a section to teachers^x. Although it leads the path unilaterally, and even though it offers presentations, work groups, resources and materials, it does not offer interaction and the section seems to be excessively linked to recruitment.

The initiative of the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport seems more interesting at the moment. It has grouped all the educational portals in a single section in its corporative web. From all of them, EducaLab stands out. It is presented as “a meeting point for education. Its objective is to support teachers and, in a broader sense, all of the Spanish educational system from the knowledge and proximity, from data and analysis and from research, experimenting and innovation^{xi}”. It is organized in five sections:

- Know: information about the educational system, projects, teacher training, data, etc.
- Connect: an educational and personal learning network
- Create: it allows content creating
- Share: to share, spread experiences, knowledge and resources

M^a José Izquierdo Alberca

- Collaborate: encouraging participation in projects that have already started. It is an excellent initiative and it offers the best path to link security and defence content.



EducaLab portal on the page of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport

Through Create (Crea) one can access Procomún, a social semantic platform that offers a repository of Open Educational Resources (REA) and the Teacher's Social Network of the Ministry (Red Social Docente del Ministerio). It enables content adapted to the Spanish curriculum to be used directly in the classroom. It offers an open source authoring tool (eXeLearning) to help teachers create and publish web content and in this way create and share content with other teachers, creating social spaces or user groups and interacting with others to create, evaluate and spread content.

In this case, EducaLab is a ministerial portal. It would also be necessary to review the possibilities offered by each and every one of the autonomous communities with educational competencies. There is no doubt that the creation and diffusion of digital content is a growing supply in Spain, as in the rest of the European countries. Pablo Hermoso de Mendoza, in charge of the consulting services at Gnos, rightly observes that “there is a great treasure in digitalized public content currently buried in official websites, inaccessible databases and dark spaces^{xii}”

CONCLUSION

Cooperation in portals and initiatives like this seems to be one of the best paths to shorten the distance between the educational world and, specifically, with teachers.

Present and future orientations on the use of the 2.0 Web imply educational apps based on four functions: creating resources, sharing resources, retrieving information and enhancing social networks^{xiii}.

It seems evident that technology plays in our favour. It is necessary to evaluate the progress achieved and to establish a plan that allows us to move forward in publishing pedagogical content, adapting the resources to different educational levels and enhancing content applicability in every type of platform.

To bypass the objections that would only be seen by the 2.0 propaganda, the best formula is to maintain the conviction that promoting quality information and content is the best service that can be given to the educational world and to the security and defence culture.

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ⁱ ARTEAGA, Félix, (Coord.), “La Defensa que viene. Criterios para la reestructuración de la Defensa en España”, *Elcano Policy Paper* 3/2013- 9/10/2013, p. 31.

ⁱⁱ In 2013 the Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques published the dossier “Les communications institutionnelles de la défense en Europe: comment les pays européens communiquent sur leur armées”, EPS dossier n. 2011/74, janvier, 2013. Unfortunately, it is not included in Spain.

ⁱⁱⁱ Natalia Arroyo, *Pinchar la burbuja de las bibliotecas en Facebook: el reto de la comunicación* 2013, ThinkEPI, disponible en [http:// www.rediris.es/list/info/iwetel.html](http://www.rediris.es/list/info/iwetel.html)

^{iv} PINTADO, César, *Las Redes Sociales y la Defensa. Un análisis DAFO*. IEEE, 119/2013, diciembre de 2013, disponible en [http:// www.ieeee.es/](http://www.ieeee.es/)

^v Boletín informativo del Ejército Español, Entrevistas Fernando Savater, año XVIII, n. 212 de septiembre 2013, disponible en [http:// www.ejercito.mde.es/](http://www.ejercito.mde.es/)

^{vi} *Claves de razón práctica*. “Disuadir y defender”, nº 229, julio-agosto 2013.

^{vii} I would like to highlight, for their interest, the US Army Heritage and Education Center-USAHEC’s initiative on August de 2013: text reading on *American Militarism and Anti-Militarism in Popular Media* www.usahec.org

^{viii} <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/educadef>

^{ix} eduscol.education.fr

^x http://www.army.mod.uk/training_education/6959.aspx

^{xi} <http://educalab.es/home>

^{xii} Clip, boletín de SEDIC, n.68, julio-diciembre de 2013. Creación, financiación y difusión de contenidos digitales, disponible en <http://www.sedic.es>

^{xiii} Scopeo, Formacion Web 2.0, Monográfico, n 1 de marzo 2009, disponible en <http://scopeo.usal.es/>