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A UGR thesis demonstrates how to teach Physics by means of cartoons

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Are cartoons a motivational element in Physics and Chemistry classes? Can we get to know if the cartoons broadcasted in TV channels are a source of previous ideas and conceptual errors for teenagers?

These are some of the many questions posed by José Miguel Vílchez González in his thesis Física y Dibujos Animados. "Una estrategia de alfabetización científica y audiovisual en la Educación Secundaria" (Physics and Cartoons. A scientific and audiovisual literacy strategy in Secondary Education), supervised by Professor Francisco Javier Perales Palacios, of the Department of Experimental Sciences of the University of Granada (Universidad de Granada [http://www.ugr.es]).

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José Miguel Vílchez's research work intends to connect scientific, daily and school knowledge through a methodological resource which involves supervising and discussing cartoons from the perspective of the laws of Physics.

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Thus, his objectives are: using comparisons among situations presented in cartoon programmes and real situations to lead to conceptual changes in pupils; stimulating pupils' critic analysis when it comes to distinguish between reality and fiction, in and outside the classroom; analysing the image of science and scientists in the cartoons, comparing it with that presented in other media; checking if cartoons can be used in the classroom as an assessing resource; connecting scientific, daily and school knowledge through experiences in the classroom, and contributing to the scientific and television literacy of Secondary Education students.

According to José Miguel Vílchez, "the didactics of Physic in current Secondary Education is in a delicate situation for two reasons: on the one hand, most teenagers think that Physics is a difficult subject disconnected with their normal life, which is causing a continuous decrease in the number of students who read the subject in all the educative levels. This situation can change by using more entertaining and accessible teaching-learning methodologies, closer to daily life. On the other hand, contemporary society offers us a wide range of information sources that, sometimes, broadcast scientific knowledge. Media, and especially television, are those which cause more impact on citizens. The problem arises when their messages are assimilated as something we can not influence, becoming sources of an anarchical bombardment of information that conditions our way of thinking and, sometimes, of doing things. They also are a source of mistaken previous ideas for citizens".

The importance of television

In industrialized countries, watching TV is the second activity –after sleep- to which children devote more time and cartoons are one of the children and youngsters' favourite programmes.

We can thus deduce that cartoon programs could well constitute a culture medium for the teaching/learning of Physics; at the same time –the author of the thesis states- "it is an important step for teenagers' scientific and TV literacy, stimulating a critic spirit before the messages of this media".

José Miguel Vílchez González's thesis suggests analysing, from a scientific point of view, chapters or sequences TV cartoon chapters, to identify phenomenon which break the laws of the Physics. This way students analyse both physical concepts and media messages, while they carry out this type of experiences in their everyday life; it is also a powerful tool to raise issues for discussion among students in the classroom, an important and, sometimes, infrequent activity.

According to the author of the thesis, they have achieved their three main objectives: "motivation to the subject, promotion of scientific and TV literacy and

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general and we have achieved our main goals, so we intend to continue doing research on this line".

Antonio Marín Ruiz | Quelle: alphagalileo
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