

Launch of the Framework for Film Education in Europe
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Text in English of Alain Bergala's talk. Translation by Suzy Gillett

This moment, when the idea to create a European Framework for Film Education is taking shape, is the continuation of a long history that varies country by country.

There is no pure film education practice that develops in isolation in schools as if in an in-vitro space. What takes place in school is never disconnected from what happens outside school. This is especially true with film which is alive and well in society, outside the walls of school. This is also valid for this European project, in that it brings together countries where the history of the rapport between film and school is very different.

To think about this question I will use the case study of France. It is not by chance that this is the country with the most developed film education in the school system. It is because it has benefited from unique historical and political circumstances in Europe, perhaps even in the world.

I will quickly trace the outline of this background from which we may draw, I think, elements for thought and foresight when implementing this European Framework.

This history exists from the beginning of the twentieth century but in France builds its solid, sustainable and collective foundation after the Second World War.

Through the networks of the Resistance workers and intellectuals, Communists and Catholics fought side-by-side and got to know each other. At the end of the war they shared the belief that popular education in neighborhoods and factories was the best weapon against the horrors that had just taken place to ensure that they would never happen again: "never again! "

In the immediate postwar period large mass cultural movements like *People and Culture* and *Labour and Culture* were born out of this ideological and political conviction. They quickly identified film, which was able to reach all levels of the population, to be the ideal vehicle for popular education. Everyone, whatever their cultural level or social background, can watch a film, understand it and talk about it. These popular education movements immediately took into account film as art, as aesthetic, not just as content or an ideological vehicle for communication, which is quite exemplary and unexpected, given their political and social nature. Pragmatically they established a distinctive pedagogy of film, set out in a book published by *People and Culture* in 1953: *A New Outlook on Film*, which comprised an introduction to film analysis and a methodology to run film clubs. In this book there are pieces by André Bazin, Chris Marker, and many others. Among the tireless film educational activists, André Bazin was at the

forefront, the future founder of *Cahiers du Cinema* whose thought would train the young people who were to go on to become filmmakers of the French New Wave. Bazin toured all over France, to run workshops, to host film club sessions and to offer film training, both at universities and in factories. At that time in France only a minority of worker's children had access to secondary school and university education and he had to go and meet them there where they were, beyond state educational institutions.

The French Cinematheque, which started out as The Film Circle, a film club set up by Henri Langlois in 1935, opened its first cinema in rue de Messine at the end of the war in 1948. Henri Langlois showed his desire to make it a place of transmission, to show *all films* to new generations. This had a decisive effect on the training of the young film-makers who became the New Wave, and who learned to make films by watching the films that Langlois showed them.

As a result of these post-war activities, large federations of Film Societies were established, which for three decades nourished France with films and reflection and debate on film practices. These federations had very rich film libraries of 16 mm and 35 mm films and organized training sessions to run film clubs. I myself was trained in this way, doing internships, attending and hosting film clubs. The powerful League of Education (created in 1866!), the great extracurricular secular movement that was recognized and partly supported by the National Education Board, circulated thousands 16 mm films intended for schools, many of which were equipped with 16 mm projectors. These popular film clubs trained the first generation of teachers "on the job" , at a time when film was not taught at university; they would go on to introduce film into the classroom in an "ad-hoc" way.

The death of Film Societies was rapid in the 70s and 80s with the rise of television, which offered a lot of films and its own Film Club programmes with presenters but obviously without possible debate with audiences. VHS players eventually killed off the use of 16mm films and 16 mm projectors in schools. The consumption of historic films became more personal and domestic.

Film education gained a lot of ground in schools and universities during the years 1970-1990. But that was also the time when education about and through film got locked inside school, and it effectively abandoned the popular non-scholar audience. Film clubs were the last to think of film education in terms of the postwar period, as a popular education. Television, which could have taken up the baton, did not, and Roberto Rossellini's dream of a popular educational television is indeed dead.

In the 70s, after the shake up of May 68, film quickly entered universities, where film departments were launched in several major cities in France. The first students to be trained in cinema in these universities in the 80s and 90s went on to be a new generation of university teachers rather than the pioneers of film that came out of the previous generations of auto-didacts nurtured by Film Societies.

The decades of 1980 and 1990 saw the entry of film into the school system, corresponding to a cultural policy that was decided and deliberately led by a minister whose role in this matter was decisive and historic. For over ten years, this minister, Jack Lang, from 1981 to 1993, was Minister of Culture and his permanent interest in film saved French cinema from the disaster that affected other national cinemas in Europe when TV channels began broadcasting films in large numbers. For example whilst Italian cinema production dropped from several hundred films a year to a mere dozen, French cinema continued its momentum by producing over 300 films a year.

Jack Lang actively contributed during this decisive decade to bring films into schools with all the means available to the Ministry of Culture, but he had to deal at the time with officials from the Ministry of Education who were not necessarily as enthusiastic. Then, in 2000, Lang himself became Minister of Education, and he implemented the policy of "*Art at School*" where he invented a new way of introducing the arts into the school system, no longer through a form of rigid teaching but as a pedagogy of experience and encounter with works of art and creators.

Film (an area of the arts for which I was at the time advisor to the Mission *Arts at School*) occupies a prime place in this policy. A small revolution took place at that moment in the angle of approach to film in the school system: film, which had long been approached primarily as a language in the French pedagogical tradition was finally considered to be primarily an art form, which as a result had considerable consequences in the actual conception of the place of film in school.

1983 saw the birth of the first "film options" that led in 1989 to a Film Baccalauréat being available in some schools.

At the same time in France a system was created that has established a lasting and regular partnership between schools and cinemas: *Collège au cinéma (Middle / Secondary School at the Cinema)* in 1989, and *Lycéens au cinéma (High School at the Cinema)* and *Ecole et cinéma (Primary School at the Cinema)* in 1993-1994.

The principle of this system is simple: several times a year classes attend a film screening at a local cinema to see films on the big screen; they then work in the classroom with their teachers about the films. These screenings are held during school time. *Primary School and cinema* is now the best established: it is active in 11 000 schools, 1200 cinemas, and 750,000 students benefit. Other countries interested in the question of film and school envy us such a system.

The distinctiveness of film education in French schools lies in the permanence of these extracurricular environments where children, youths and teachers have been able to relate to film - in real cinemas - and also that the films are chosen for their cinematographic and film heritage qualities. French schools have been supported by these systems that have obviously prepared and accompanied the chances of success of film entering *classrooms*.

In 1995, on the occasion of the centenary of cinema, the educational department of La Cinémathèque française created a pioneering pedagogical system : *Cinema, One Hundred Years of Youth*. The purpose of this system is to experiment with an exemplary film pedagogy, the methodology of which can be shared with other countries, in Europe and with the rest of the world. This system has developed precise and rigorous protocols and functions as a self-study group and a permanent exchange between participants (teachers and cinema professionals).

20 years after its birth we have finally realized that *Cinema, Cent Ans de Jeunesse* was unwittingly a prototype, the foreshadowing of what could be a way of working between European countries. Another original feature of this system was the desire to establish it in very different places, across very varied classes of age and social backgrounds, whilst practicing the same teaching method for all. This was one of the conditions of its exemplary aims.

This short recap of the history of the introduction of film into the French school system enables us to identify three stages that made its unique development in the world possible.

Phase 1: Some teachers who love film introduce film into their class, whether by passion or ideological conviction, but their practice is still local, individual, and not always supported by the educational institution, even if it is tolerated. This is the phase of the "pioneer", often film buff teachers, who were trained in film clubs and are film activists. This generation has for the most part retired en masse in the past 10 years, leaving room for teachers whose background and training have not gone through the same story, but some of whom have benefited from a university education. But the limit to individual teaching is that everything starts from scratch for each who practices it and there is no way to capitalize on the experience gained.

Luckily cinema still arouses the desire to teach it, even in people who have not studied film. And in well thought out teaching this is not really a handicap. The "ignorant school master" (to paraphrase Rancière) that loves film and has a real desire to transmit it, can become a very good teacher, if they find the right conditions, within a group of peers for self-training, and also the right tools.

Phase 2: The base of pioneers, teachers and concerned activists widens and they begin to organize themselves in networks where information is circulated, experience shared and peer to peer training meetings take place. This rough organization sometimes leads to the start of partial recognition by schools and some specific methods. During this phase, pedagogical ideas begin to be exchanged, breaking the solitude of teachers...

Most European countries are now in this phase, which is more or less developed and structured.

Phase 3: The central educational institution (the Ministry of Education, the State) decides to implement a national education policy of film in school. This is

the chance that France has had, which unfortunately remains to this day the only country to have experienced such a mutation.

The mere fact that the Minister of Education loudly affirms its conviction in this area gives immediate legitimacy to the teachers concerned, and some problems (management of schedules, trips out of school, consideration of these teachers by their colleagues and school leaders, etc.) are quickly resolved. Everything becomes easier because of the legitimacy and the affirmation of a common and shared aim, as was possible in France. "Cinema as art," cinema as "culture and practice" are brought together. Even if there is a regression, as there is in France today, a legitimacy of these practices always remains.

Could Europe one day play a central political role at an international level?

To start with a platform of goals is obviously essential. This is a necessary and a very good start. And this Framework which brings us together today is a good example of what should be the goal of all education in film: to articulate culture with creation; to articulate the individual and the collective; to articulate the learning of taste, thinking about film and that of practice.

This Framework even opens a small window between the inside and outside of school: home, family, social surroundings. This aspect is the least developed in France, where the school and the family, for example, remain rather sealed off from one another, when it is not suspicious and hostile.

I therefore welcome this act of birth because it has avoided the pitfalls of dogmatic rigid "pedagogues", who would seek a "programme" of film education.

I would just like to open up some perspectives that could subsequently help establish, from this platform, a truly educational (and self-sustaining community).

In the *Manifesto of the People and Culture* of 1945, we find these two sentences:
"Popular culture is not to be distributed, you have to live together"
"Real culture is born out of life and returns to life"

The most important perspectives seem to me today to agree on the essential question of why we want to introduce an approach to film into school. If it were just to add another discipline to traditional school subjects, in the same model, it would be a lot of effort for not very much.

If we want to introduce the cinema as art in school, it is primarily for there to be this back and forth between culture and life, a back and forth which schools are sorely lacking in their classic disciplines. So that through this artform, young people experience life, beauty, a vision of the world that is theirs in the age, country and the era in which they live.

The permanent danger of current approaches to film in school is of losing the reason why it is done. This is what I call the 'gadgetization' of film in school.

It consists of doing for doing's sake without questioning what we are really looking for through this experience.

An introduction to cinema as art is meaningful only if it disrupts the habits and the hum of the school institution, notably in the face-to-face interaction of the teacher and students. One of the major virtues of a film education as art – which was that of the Arts and School programme, and since 1995 that of *Cinema cent ans de jeunesse* - is to open classes for non-teachers of cinema, for practitioners who accompany students over time in a long project of film. The pedagogy of film is only valuable over a long duration, the rest is "dressing".

This arrival in the classroom of people from the film industry redistributes the cards and brings new values that allow some students to see recognition of their skills and qualities they had never been able to show inside the institution. It is good for everyone: the teacher, students, and the film practitioner. The atmosphere of the school is thereby transformed.

What could be a European educational community in terms of cinema approach?

A community is not just people who, each in their country have the same objectives. This is when practical and common understanding is installed. An educational community is when everyone in his country is aware that the others are following the same methodology, are going through the same educational work protocols and share the same image/idea of cinema. The methodology is neither a programme nor the imposition of a common content.

The methodology provides an escape from the atomization of practices without reducing national differences. The singular identities, on the contrary, are best revealed by the structure (the game or role) of a common methodology, of shared protocols, which let us be interested in what others are doing and by what you yourself, went through.

What I say here is not a utopia; it is already taking place at a European level with *Cinema cent ans de jeunesse*. And it is not difficult, it's just a matter of organization, of shared methodology and actual meetings between partners.

The digital transformation

Finally I would like to raise an alarm about the most radical of mutations in the past 15 years: the transition to digital consumption.

This revolution has nothing to do with the old question of generational differences in culture, it is a true *anthropological mutation*. The intensive use of the Internet has made problematic, and soon perhaps insurmountable, the basic requirement of film : to watch a film in its entirety with no possibility to switch from one film to another or from one sequence to another, being obliged to go

from one scene to another until the end of the film. That is to say, of the acceptance of the duration and linearity of film.

Only the cinema screen requires us, in some way, to see a film continuously, even if more and more spectators (even at the Cannes Film Festival) while watching the film consult from time to time their own personal screen, reading and responding to text messages. At home, one may suspend at will the flow of a film on one's television screen and resume after an interruption, but also slow it down, speed it up, zap one or more scenes, go from one film to another, etc. To watch a whole film without interruption is no longer the "normal" practice of younger generations. The practice is that of the fragment, the rapid move from one clip to another. This now commonplace practice produces an exponential increase in our faculty of impatience. Jumping from page to page on the Internet and the pleasure of dizziness that goes with it one becomes less and less aware that this random accelerated montage often leaves nothing left in our memory, one page erasing the next. Watching a film in the cinema is increasingly an antidote to digital impatience.

This mode of rapid circulation was, up until relatively recently, still linear. Now it is mutating with multi screens where impatience has another outlet in the ability to simultaneously move from one screen to another, from the email inbox to Twitter or Facebook while still following with the corner of their eye a football match or an American TV series.

I have no doubt that this new way of relating to images – the fast speed, widespread practice of switching, and concurrency of multiple screens - will develop new forms of intelligence about the image, but it is too early to have the foggiest idea about it.

So what can an educator between two eras do, who has given themselves the mission to educate Internet natives to linear cinema from a time which required a continuous duration?

First, give them the experience and taste. Then don't be intimidated by the demagoguery according to which you should run even faster than students and the circulation on the Internet. You must first be convinced that there is no pedagogy without slowing down and without creating links between what is seen.

The teacher does not have to accompany the logic that governs the highest stage of consumption: passing more and more rapidly from one product to another, forgetting the past that slows down, and getting drunk on the pure quicksilver of this speed.

If education has a sense, it is more than ever that of slowing down. Time is the raw material of cinema. Although digital is making us forget about it by replacing it with an abstract and adjustable speed.

To educate must be more than ever about creating bonds, between ideas and memory, between fragments of films and between the films themselves. To educate is finally to maintain a link between the past and the present. Without that connection we risk training chickens without heads, amnesic and happy to be so.

There is no question of refusing traffic on the Internet, from which no one can escape - and from which we all draw every day incredible benefits and time saved searching for information and access to resources. But instead we should teach our students to create links between the millions of film clips that are found there and that are a mine of unprecedented wealth, provided you know what to do with them.

And for that we must invent teaching protocols for film that are used via YouTube. I'm currently thinking about this precise question of a pedagogical but not **pedagogue, use** of YouTube and other similar resources sites.

Thanks to digital tools that have become everyday objects, such as smartphones, all pupils and students can film shots, clips or small short films and upload them as one throws a drop of water in the ocean of the Internet.

But do the young people who shoot and upload these clips learn something about how to make a film? Do they express themselves? Is there really any creation?

Spontaneous creativity, real, aroused by the Internet is not to be confused with creation. Creativity is the essential fuel of creation, because it is the indicator of an impulse to do so, but for there to be true creation there needs to be a project, and a thought of this project in relation to the world and the art that is practiced.

Real creation also requires a reflexive break from the widespread acceleration of the Internet. There is no spontaneous teaching by the Net. The user who posts a clip, expects an instantaneous and statistical evaluation: the number of "seens" and "likes," as the film industry only counts the number of tickets sold. A true creation is firstly self-assessed by the creator themselves in relation to their project, and this assessment is done in solitude and with doubt. For him (or her), the exchange, the sharing with others comes only when the film is finished and they face the Other: the critic and the public.

A true pedagogy of filmmaking goes through a period of time, that of the development and maturation of a project. Gadgetization and activism may give the illusion of a spontaneous acquisition of know-how that requires no thought, no plan, no work, no transmission, and creates many false illusions.

Our role as educators is to find other strategies, other protocols, to enroll in an educational community that is aware of its goals and its means, to have an acute awareness of this new situation we are just beginning to be faced with. This Framework for Film Education in Europe can contribute to that. Good luck to it.

