

Select Committee on Communications and Digital

Corrected oral evidence: The future of journalism

Tuesday 17 March 2020

3.25 pm

Watch the meeting

Members present: Lord Gilbert of Panteg (The Chair); Baroness Buscombe;
Viscount Colville of Culross; Baroness Grender; The Lord Bishop of Worcester.

Evidence Session No. 5

Heard in Public

Questions 44 - 49

Witness

I: Anaïs Adriaens-Allemand, International Project Manager, CLEMI [via video link].

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Examination of witness

Anaïs Adriaens-Allemand.

Q44 **The Chair:** Hello, Anaïs. Welcome to this inquiry by the House of Lords Select Committee on Communications and Digital. As you know, we are looking at the future of journalism in the UK. Today, we are focusing on digital literacy. Thank you very much for joining us from Paris. I hope you are keeping safe and well. In the circumstances, it is especially kind of you to give us your time.

This session will be broadcast online, and a transcript will be taken that will be part of the evidence to our inquiry. Can you briefly introduce yourself and tell us about the work of CLEMI, the organisation that you represent?

Anaïs Adriaens-Allemand: First, thank you for having me. I would have been happy to come to see you, but circumstances decided otherwise. I am happy to talk to you through my webcam in Paris. I am the international project manager for CLEMI, which is the French media and information literacy centre. It operates for the French Ministry of National Education and is in charge of media and information literacy in the French education system.

CLEMI was created in the early 1980s with a mission to train teachers to have better knowledge of the news media system and to build children's citizenship skills by providing tools and fostering their critical thinking on media and information. We rely on a national team and a strong network of local academic co-ordinators, as well as on several media partners to build a project for action for schools.

We can divide CLEMI activity into several aspects. The first is teacher training in media and information literacy. Thirty thousand teachers are trained each year by CLEMI. We also co-produce tools and resources in media literacy. We support media projects and production in schools, and we develop projects connecting media professionals and teachers.

Our main symbolic activity is a press and media week in schools, which last year celebrated its 30th edition, so it is a very old operation. It offers children the opportunity to discover the plurality of the media sector and to exchange with media professionals each year through workshops or media visits. More than 4 million children and 18,000 schools are involved, with more than 1,800 media partners.

This year's event was supposed to start in a week, at the end of March, but as you know the context is what it is and French schools are closed. We are therefore working on a pedagogical continuity plan to allow access to online content and to bring press and media week to life in this special context, through the internet and online resources.

Q45 **The Chair:** Thank you. One issue we face right across this field is that a number of organisations do very good work, but often their work is unco-ordinated, and sometimes, at worst, they compete with one other. Can you tell us a bit about how work is co-ordinated and whether you play a

role in pulling together the work of other organisations operating in the field?

Anaïs Adriaens-Allemand: One of our main strengths is that we are linked to the Ministry of National Education. That gives us the ability to act as a go-between for the different stakeholders in media and information literacy in France. We help all those organisations to co-operate and to act together to respond to this big challenge.

We organise projects with institutional partners and other ministries. For instance, the Ministry of Culture in France is very involved in media and information literacy. We also work with other organisations such as trades unions, parents' federations, popular education associations and, of course, the media. We co-produce resources with them. We offer pedagogical expertise because part of our team is made up of teachers, who can offer an educational perspective on the content produced. Our expertise is recognised by other actors. That gives us the ability to create consortiums and bring together different actors. That is even more concrete in respect of this year's media week in schools, because all those media partners and actors offer different types of activity, and it can all fit together, because so many students are concerned with media and information literacy. It is important that all stakeholders take part and work together to offer a coherent approach.

The Chair: That point seems to be important. There are two elements to it: getting all the organisations to work together and co-ordinate but also having some consistency of approach. Although they will all want to run their own programmes, approach their own different audiences and have their own perspectives, their work should at least be consistent and not in conflict. Is your organisation respected as a thought leader on developing the best approach that all the other organisations then adopt?

Anaïs Adriaens-Allemand: As I said, the link with the Ministry of National Education gives us this specificity among different actors. All the actors come to us because we have direct access to schools and are part of the education system. It gives us some credibility but also some concrete action on the part of teachers, and concrete feedback from them, because we act with teachers; we have a structure at the national level as well as local academic co-ordinators who have a direct link with teachers.

They can tell us when something is working and when it is not. We have a group called e-Media Education lab, which is working on projects. One is Class Investigation—Classe Investigation, in French—an immersive journalistic game that we produced. In the media lab that produced the game there were journalists, teachers, and members of CLEMI. All those people worked together on their own approach to the subject. This gives us real capacity to create some strong projects.

The Chair: Thank you. Other members of the Committee may want to follow up on some of those points.

The Lord Bishop of Worcester: Briefly, you mentioned your link with

the Minister of Education being a great strength. In this country at the moment, the relationship between politics, politicians and the media is not always smooth. Does that raise questions as well as give you help?

Anaïs Adriaens-Allemand: Not that much. It is more the link with teachers on the ground that is our strength. We do not have a political structure. We have a board with different media partners, media organisations and media associations that ensure our independence from political power. This gives us the ability to assure our partners that we are not working for the Government but with the education system, if you see what I mean.

Q46 **Viscount Colville of Culross:** Good afternoon. I am interested in some of the challenges that you face, because this is fast-moving technology. Is not one of the problems that technology is moving so fast that the courses very quickly become outdated?

I am also interested in how you deal with social media, such as Facebook, and algorithms, because their algorithms are organised to engage the user, come what may. How do you manage to deal with those particular challenges?

Anaïs Adriaens-Allemand: First, we have kept the same dynamic that has underpinned our activity since our creation in the 1980s. When you read texts at that time, it is very interesting to see that some of the problems we are facing now were also considered very important in the 1980s. They were already talking about the place of media, words and information on screen.

Our aim is education using more than tools, in order to develop critical thinking in the research and dissemination of information, and promoting school media production to give students the means to produce information themselves in order to be the actors of what they are doing, not the disseminators of information without checking it. That is a big part of what we do, because it is a way of ensuring that they reflect instead of act on just one aspect that will be outdated when another technology comes in.

Another big part of what we do is working with social media groups, such as Facebook, which you mentioned, or Twitter. We do not work very directly with those organisations on how algorithms work. We focus more on how we can encourage citizens in their own use of those tools. We also work with media. I do not know whether it is the same in Great Britain, but in France many media use social media to give information. *Le Monde*, for instance, releases stories on Snapchat with content, and we are running a workshop on those aspects to help students to use those tools in their own way. We are also trying to prove to them that they can use them to inform themselves through media, such as *Le Monde*.

Viscount Colville of Culross: One of our concerns is that large numbers of young people get their news from social media—Facebook, or whatever. The difficulty quite often is knowing the actual source of that news. It just seems to be one among many. You talked about *Le Monde*

just now. How can you help to increase the literacy of the students so that they understand where the trusted sources can be and where the clickbait might be?

Anaïs Adriaens-Allemand: We are holding workshops, and access to them is free on our website. One is called Déclic'Critique—Critical Click, you could say. We are working with students to help them to ask the right questions before reading something and to ensure that they check the website and ask where the information comes from before they share it, and giving them the tools to verify where an image has been taken from and to take the time to reflect—to be sure that when they see information they take the time to ask themselves, “Am I going to share that? Do I believe it? How can I check if it is right or not?”

Viscount Colville of Culross: You say that you have been talking to Facebook. How helpful has it been in trying to help your cause or give you any kind of materials for your students?

Anaïs Adriaens-Allemand: We are talking to Facebook, because we believe it is important to have discussions with it, but we are not using it to produce resources right now. That might change, but right now we have clean lines; we are producing our own resources. The idea is more to have discussions with it and to exchange information rather than produce materials with it, because it is a complex subject. GAFAM has to play its part, and we cannot co-operate without making sure that we do not open up everything to them.

Q47 **Viscount Colville of Culross:** Could you describe the impact of your initiatives? How do you assess the success that CLEMI has had so far?

Anaïs Adriaens-Allemand: The Ministry of Culture conducted a survey in 2018 on children’s reflexes when it comes to information. It showed that students who have had media literacy teaching were more willing to check their information, to verify images and to inform themselves. Part of media literacy teaching is to show children that it is useful to them to inform themselves and not to stay in their own bubble without wondering what is going on in the world.

The survey was declarative, so it is not as precise as a concrete assessment, but it also looked into media literacy and was aware of the reflexes that people need and the fact that people who did not receive that teaching were more willing to share without reflection and less eager to inform themselves.

Q48 **The Lord Bishop of Worcester:** Could we have some insight into what media literacy initiatives you feel would support the involvement of people from a lower socioeconomic background? That barrier is something that we are constantly up against here.

Anaïs Adriaens-Allemand: First, we are working in schools, so we can reach all kinds of children, because they all go to school. That is why it is very important for us that media and information literacy is part of children’s curricula. It has been decided in law that media and information literacy is one of the competencies that has to be acquired at

school. That was very important for us, because it helped us to ensure that all citizens are reached by our initiatives.

Secondly, we now also have strong teacher training on this subject. That is essential, because media and information literacy is not a precise subject; it has to be taught as part of all subjects taught at school. Therefore, it is important that all teachers have training in it to help them give access to the subject to their pupils.

We also decided to address another group that was not part of our initial audience. We decided to produce a guide for families—in French, it is called *La famille Tout-Écran*—along with a TV series produced with the French public broadcaster, France Télévisions, and the family branch of social security, the CNAF. We decided that the guide should be for all parents, to help them participate in their children’s media and information literacy.

It was very important for us to address the issues experienced by parents. All parents are confronted by issues to do with social media, screen time, privacy settings and cyberstalking, so we wanted to offer our expertise not only to teachers but to parents. The TV series was also important, because being broadcast on TV made it easier to access a larger proportion of the population. Very short episodes are broadcast on the French national TV. They have a humorous tone, but they help parents to think about the problems and be more able to take part in their kids’ media and information literacy.

The Lord Bishop of Worcester: Do you think that what you are doing has the knock-on effect of alerting people to the possibility of being involved in a career in media and so forth? One problem that we encounter here is a tremendous lack of diversity among those involved in journalism and the media generally. They tend to come from higher socioeconomic groups and there is an underrepresentation of ethnic minorities.

Anaïs Adriaens-Allemand: We do believe that, yes. The media must be greatly involved to make this possible. As I said, all the important media organisations in France, public and private, are taking part in our initiatives. They are involved in all of them, but mainly the school press and media week. During this week, they give access to their offices and production sites so that children can go and see how editorial committees work and ask questions of journalists. Journalists also come to classrooms to explain what they do and how their job works.

The second aspect is that we very much encourage media production in schools. I do not know if this happens much in the UK but, in France, many schools have their own online TV channel, radio station or blog, stuff like that. That gives children the opportunity to produce content by themselves, act like journalists and grasp what being a journalist is like. That is important for children, because it gives them the appetite for the job.

Q49 **The Lord Bishop of Worcester:** I want to look at the other end of the spectrum. If you have access to schools in the way you do and a captive

audience, as it were, working with young people is easy. How can media literacy initiatives help older people?

Anaïs Adriaens-Allemand: That is a very important subject that we are currently working on. The European Commission has decided that older people are part of the target audience because, as you may know, they share a lot of false news and information. However, they are not our main target at the moment and we have not developed content specifically for them.

Part of what our family guide aims to do is create debate within the family, with parents and grandparents, on the importance of our own practices. The idea behind our guide is to help parents question their own social media practice and screen use. We believe that by creating debate within the family, we can involve all parts of the population.

The Chair: Anaïs. Thank you very much. I am afraid that we are out of time. You have been very generous in giving evidence to us this afternoon. It has been very useful. I guess that your life will be disrupted over the next few months, as ours will, but we look forward to following your work. Your evidence has been very useful to our inquiry. Thank you again for your time and stay safe.

Anaïs Adriaens-Allemand: Thank you very much for having me.