

Article

Including the Experiences of Children and Youth in Media Education

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Abstract

This article explores how the concepts of inclusion and experience can be approached and applied in educating children and youth about the media. Using a multiple-case study approach, we present three cases where media education programs were delivered to students in the Czech Republic. The first case is a three-month-long program aimed at nurturing students' media literacy and encouraging their civic participation. It involved 17 vocational school students (ages 17–19) at risk of social exclusion. The second case is a three-hour workshop promoting children's cooperation with their peers and civic engagement with media in a diverse society tested with 60 children (ages 10–11) in three classrooms in two public elementary schools. The third is a year-long media education program based on students' guided self-reflection on their media experiences, attended by eight students (ages 15–17) at a private high school. Despite numerous differences in the programs (goals, activities, duration, context, student demographics, etc.) and their varied approaches to promoting inclusivity and the whole student experience, we argue that each one has the potential to contribute to creating a more inclusive society that respects diversity. We also believe that longer programs would be more successful in supporting children and youths' immediate and future well-being.

Keywords

children; Czech Republic; diversity; inclusion; media education; youth

Issue

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1. Introduction

An estimated 100 million people are at risk of social exclusion in Europe (Eurostat, 2021). This situation presents European society, institutions, and policymakers with a challenge that can only be met with social innovation in many areas. A large number of studies show that social exclusion is:

A complex and multi-faceted process that is caused by dynamics that are often intertwined and as such strengthen each other and often lead to simultaneous deprivation at the level of work, education, living conditions, income, social security, daily resources or health. (Cappuccio, 2017, p. 223)

For the past 25 years, media education has been trying to contribute in various ways to a more inclusive society (Spandagou, 2021). This article presents a multi-case study that describes and compares three different media education programs in the Czech Republic for children and youth (ages 10–19). All of them strove to contribute to the creation of an inclusive society. One program was delivered at a state-funded vocational high school, another at state-funded elementary schools, and the third at a private lyceum. The case studies illustrate ways in which media education can address the problem of social exclusion by drawing on children's and youths' authentic media experiences and their other lived experiences. We look at how media education can balance the desire to meet externally set learning goals with students' personal needs and overall well-being,

especially when it is constrained by limits on the length of programs.

2. Inclusivity in Media Education

Social in/exclusion generally refers to “social processes in which financial resources and skills, knowledge and abilities enable or impede one to participate in (all aspects of) everyday life” (Brants & Frissen, 2003, p. 5). In media education, inclusion and inclusivity can broadly be understood as the “enlargement of the target groups (including all persons, even those with access difficulties) as well as of the multimodal texts and technologies” (Marci-Boehncke & Trapp, 2019, p. 4). The objective of inclusive media education could therefore be that regardless of their culture, gender, or language, all children and youth should enjoy the benefits of being media literate and of full participation in public life (The New London Group, 1996).

Media literacy is usually understood as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and produce print and electronic media (Aufderheide, 1993). However, striving for a highly specific definition of media literacy runs counter to attempts to unify what is a rather fragmented field, whether it is done in the name of “transliteracy” (Frau-Meigs, 2012, p. 20), or simply “literacy” (Potter, 2012). We unapologetically take advantage of the lack of a uniform definition of media literacy and media education in this article. The three media education programs in the case studies we will discuss were all designed and applied in order to both nurture students’ media literacy and create a more inclusive society, in which all children and youth feel that they belong. However, each program approached both media literacy and the problem of in/exclusion in a slightly different way.

Like media literacy, inclusion can also mean many things in media education research and in pedagogical practice. A number of studies have attempted to determine whether the system of media education is in fact inclusive enough of all groups in society (Cho et al., 2020) and have tested various ways to improve inclusivity (Cappuccio, 2017; Hobbs, 2013; Kotilainen & Pienimäki, 2019). These studies have suggested changes in curricula and pedagogy that are intended to improve students’ school attendance, participation, and success, as well as positively influence their personal and later professional lives (Guo & Chase, 2011; Rasi et al., 2017, p. 23). Through the first case study, we discuss media education program specifically designed to support marginalized students’ inclusion in public life (Römer et al., 2022). We also focus on media education that teaches students (most of them non-minority) about inclusion through/by/in media (Ramsey et al., 2022), as in the second case study. Finally, the third case study illustrates media education that welcomes students’ diverse experiences, even those seemingly irrelevant, in the process of learning about media and one’s life with them (Hodobod, in press).

By marginalized students on which the first case study focuses, we mean youths who are deprived of full participation in society by others or themselves. This approximates the nomenclature of Kotilainen (2009), who calls them “vulnerable” youths, Freire (1970), for whom they are “oppressed,” and Ashtana (2006), who prefers the term “disadvantaged.” A large part of the media education agenda has been focused on designing programs to empower and include marginalized social groups. Studies have focused on programs for pensioners, disabled persons, and poor people (Brants & Frissen, 2003; Kaimara et al., 2021; Spandagou, 2021). Others deal with ethnic minorities (Pandya, 2018), youths living in segregated parts of a city (Cappuccio, 2017), and still others with “at-risk” youth (Pienimäki & Kotilainen, 2021). Numerous studies show that media education can be beneficial for marginalized students. It empowers them to raise their voices, as in a three-year study by Pandya (2018) based on video production. Pandya’s study explored the role of media education in Mexican-American students’ protests against the closing of their school in California. Another two-year-long media education program conducted in youth detention facilities in Portugal helped youths keep in touch with online technology while in detention (Brites & Castro, 2021).

Turning to the second case study, researchers have also explored ways in which social justice, equity, and cooperation can be nurtured regardless of students’ sociocultural backgrounds (Pandya, 2018) and how media education can support children and youth in challenging white supremacy and hegemony. Media portrayals of people and situations often reinforce prejudices and stereotypes, contributing to social division, discrimination, and exclusion (Doane, 2022; Nilsen & Turner, 2021). That is why Neag et al. (2022) argue that inclusive media literacy education should be directed at both majority students and students living on the margins of society. Beyond teaching children to analyze and critically evaluate media messages, media education can also support children and youth in using the media to connect with people from different cultures and countries and take a stand against negative stereotypes and assumptions about others (Supa et al., 2021). Media education can contribute to a more inclusive society in diverse and complex ways.

3. Incorporating Students’ Experiences in Media Education

In pursuit of their goals for an inclusive society, many media education programs have taken a project-based, experiential learning approach. These include Cappuccio’s (2017) video-game-based project in Palermo, Italy, Pandya’s (2018) filmmaking project at a bilingual charter school in California, and Hobbs’ (2013) comic-book-making project, to name just a few. Traditional education mostly relies on the direct

presentation of existing knowledge by a teacher to students. By contrast, Dewey (1938, p. 59) says that, in experiential learning, “the teacher loses the position of external boss or dictator but takes on that of leader of group activities.” Activities must be carefully planned by the teacher, taking into account his or her students’ previous experiences, knowledge, and the surroundings in which they live (Buckingham, 2019; Carlsson et al., 2008). Hobbs (2016, p. 30) advocates “learning by doing,” in which students and educators engage jointly with their “head, heart, hands and spirit.” The first two case studies applied just such an experiential learning approach.

In the third case study, the educators took Dewey’s approach to the “experience learners already have” even further by exploring what happens when learners’ media experiences are not only included in the lesson but are truly made central to the media education program. In that case, media education fully includes the student’s whole, authentic life with media. Zezulková (2015, p. 168) recommends that “the child should be encouraged to learn about media through exploring and reflecting on the subjective role they play in his or her individual and collective life.” As students engage in self-reflection in the course of their media education, their everyday media experiences become important for their own sake, not simply as tools for achieving externally mandated learning outcomes. Students who are reflecting on their unique media experiences begin to utilize all components of their being as a source of knowledge, i.e., their “whole self” (Jung et al., 1964, p. 60). Exercises in reflection also allow an educator to gain more comprehensive feedback about a student and the student’s experiences, both with the media and with social inclusion/exclusion (Nagata, 2004). Such exercises help educators support learners as they navigate their own lives and mindfully put themselves and their experiences at the center of their inquiry (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998).

Even more crucially, media education must abandon all communication hierarchies (e.g., adult-child), protectionist tendencies, and the idea that children’s and youths’ media experiences need to be mediated by a “more experienced” adult. As Hobbs and Jensen (2009, p. 8) write, media education:

Is not about replacing students’ perspectives with the perspectives of the authority, be that expert, scholar, critic, or teacher...it is about teaching them how they can arrive at informed choices that are most consistent with their own values.

This freedom allows students to feel included in their educational experiences. It gives them the opportunity to explore and express their own lives with media while learning about and gaining respect for the experiences of others and their ways of being. We suggest that all three case studies presented here demonstrate ways in which children’s and youth’s experiences with media education can meaningfully contribute to their immediate

and future well-being, as well as to a more inclusive society as a whole (Neag et al., 2022).

4. Multiple Case Study Research

This section introduces three separate case studies of media education programs aimed at including children’s and youth’s media experiences in media education. The first two studies applied a project-based approach and the third applied a reflective approach. We used multiple case studies to analyze patterns and explore similarities and differences (Ridder, 2017) in the three qualitative research and educational projects, which were conducted in the Czech Republic between the years 2019 and 2021. We adopted Eisenhardt’s (1989) and Eisenhardt and Graebner’s (2007) inductive approach to case study analysis. That approach produces theoretical propositions based on empirical evidence. Empirical data was collected using diverse qualitative research methods described under each case study (Sections 4.1–4.3). The data thus obtained was openly coded and subjected to reflective thematic analysis in order to identify common themes and patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The schools and the children’s parents gave written consent for their children’s participation, and the children and youths themselves gave their oral consent. The Research Ethics Committee of the Charles University Faculty of Social Sciences approved all three projects.

Although they differ greatly in many respects, we chose the three programs because collectively they show the relevance, importance, and educational potential of prioritizing children’s and youths’ experiences in pedagogy—no matter what approach to media education was applied. Each program made use of and addressed students’ experiences and their social situations in a slightly different way. The case studies illustrate the problem in media education of balancing externally set learning goals against adequate attention to students’ personal needs and overall well-being.

4.1. Case Study 1: Participatory Media Education for Young, At-Risk Students

The first case study examines a three-month media education program at a vocational school in the Czech town of Louny, in which 17 students aged 17 to 19 participated during the autumn of 2019 (see Römer et al., 2022). In general, students at vocational schools tend to be truant more often than other students (Sirovátka et al., 2003, p. 56). The schools’ graduates are among those who have the most problems finding employment (Dvořáková, 2013). Czech vocational school students are further marginalized by the fact that while media education is compulsory for their peers in Czech grammar schools, that is not the case at vocational schools. As a result, vocational schools offer fewer media education courses (JSNS, 2017). The value of media education is greatly underestimated in the Czech Republic.

As The New London Group (1996) says, doing media education research with vocational students can be described as inherently inclusive.

The experiential learning media literacy program delivered by the research team in this case study was based on action research methodology (Bradbury, 2015). It consisted of online and offline media and civic participation activities that were included as part of the school's ongoing practical training class. Over the period of one semester, the students in the class focused on a social topic of their choosing—in this case, animal rights. They explored various ways to communicate their concerns about animal rights to heterogeneous target groups using different media. Their activities included making masks to wear and pamphlets to distribute at a parade in the center of Prague, the so-called Velvet Carnival, which celebrated the anniversary of the anti-communist demonstrations in Prague on November 17, 1989. The students also communicated with the general public and local media by organizing a press conference, preparing a press release, and posting on social media. They learned how to evaluate their potential audiences and to use a broad variety of offline and online communication channels. The researchers collected a large amount of multimodal data, ranging from field notes and student surveys to interviews with students and teachers. For more detailed information, see Römer et al. (2022).

The program of instruction was designed as a participatory and interactive experience (Livingstone, 2010). It was non-hierarchical (Dahlgren, 2013; Dewey, 1938). It blended the in-school and out-of-school worlds of the students (Carlsson et al., 2008) and their online and offline activities (Kahne et al., 2012). It aspired to break up the school routine in many ways, such as allowing the students to use the first names of the lecturers and decide on class activities to a certain extent (e.g., choosing to work on some tasks in groups or alone and choosing the class's theme for its presentation at the Velvet Carnival parade). Nevertheless, some students complained that the project was not run democratically because they were obliged to participate in it as a part of their practical training class.

We observed a strong improvement in the students' media literacy competencies. The blending of online and offline activities and the in-school and out-of-school life of the students enabled them to recognize that they had gained new skills: "I knew that people use social media to participate in politics. But I never realized I could do it. Then I experienced the process live." It was the first time in their lives that the students had created media content for a political, civic-oriented purpose. As has been found by other researchers working with other students (Hobbs, 2013; Pandya, 2018), creating content was the students' favorite part of the project: "Making the masks was the best. I had never worked with clay, and it was just so cool to feel it taking shape." The students' confidence in their ability to create offline, digital, and social net-

work media content meant to influence a public debate increased significantly. According to post-study surveys and interviews, the project also led them to reflect slightly more on the quality of media sources.

Most of the students came from challenging backgrounds. One minor student already had a child, and another had several family members who were in prison. A minimum of three students were active drug users and one participant had experienced severe bullying. Many students struggled with low self-esteem and general apathy. Only some of the participating students felt they had developed strong, permanent civic participation skills. As one of the participants said, "I don't care about the outside world. When people ask me what I think, I say nothing. Whenever I have tried to speak, everyone has always been mean to me, including the teachers."

4.2. Case Study 2: Media Education to Address Diversity, Social Exclusion, and Lack of Participation

The second case study involves a three-hour-long, externally delivered media and multicultural education workshop called "Changing the World Together," developed for elementary school classrooms. It was repeated three times and was attended by 60 10 to 11-year-olds. The workshop was designed based on findings generated by 25 focus groups with a total of 85 children (46 girls and 39 boys) aged eight to 12 and conducted in four public schools in the Czech Republic in 2019 (see Supa et al., 2021; Tejkalova et al., 2021). The focus groups explored (a) children's attitudes toward people from diverse cultures and their relationships with them, as formed by the media content the children consume and produce, and (b) issues of diversity and conformity in the children's peer culture. The educational program based on the focus group work was developed and tested in schools during 2020 and 2021 in cooperation with an external research partner from the Multicultural Center Prague, who delivered the workshops. Observational notes and post-program questionnaires in which students reflected on the workshop and the most important things they had learned were collected by the research team and then openly coded.

The program was designed based on findings from research with children who were exploring their experiences with media and diversity and their attitudes toward them. Therefore, it encouraged them to draw on their experiences right from the start. It had the goals of (a) fostering cooperation through joint activities and by sharing interests, (b) challenging the participants' stereotypes about others and encouraging them to accept diverse people, and (c) supporting children in developing the willingness and confidence to become activists/agents themselves, using different types of media to express themselves, connect and communicate with others, and take action. The workshop consisted of different kinds of experiential learning activities in which groups of children together developed campaigns

addressing a social cause of their choice. The first activity, “pulling together with one rope,” was an icebreaker that encouraged cooperation in solving complex tasks. In the second activity, “looking for shared civic interests,” the children were asked to decide upon a social issue they would like to address in the program. In the third activity, “being inspired,” they were shown photos and video clips of young activists from different parts of the world who shared their perspectives on diversity and their experiences with it. In the fourth activity, “from facing challenges to becoming superheroes,” the children chose a fictional superhero to help them fight for their chosen cause. In the fifth activity, “communication and media strategy,” the children created a mock media campaign that included various forms of media. The children communicated across platforms, coming up with ideas about how their selected superhero(es) could help them achieve their goals. Finally, the groups presented their media campaigns to the entire class. For more details about the program, see Ramsey et al. (2022).

The first two rounds of the program showed that the children were more interested in discussing their personal experiences and shared interests than in coming up with a communication campaign. This was especially true in one round when a group chose an intimate topic with which the children had shared experience:

We chose the topic of parental divorce. We both have experience with it. We want to send a message to parents: 1. Please don't argue! 2. If we don't have a complete family, we're experiencing hell. 3. Others mock us and bully us because of it. 4. We don't want to celebrate Christmas twice, we'd rather do it together. I would make short YouTube videos...and I prefer TikTok.

The first two rounds of the workshop clearly showed the usefulness of the media education method we developed for supporting children in reflecting on and sharing their personal experiences. Therefore, we changed the third round of the workshop in order to achieve a better balance of the three intended learning outcomes. We did so by increasing the time allocated to activities focused on using media for collective civic participation at the expense of time for the children to think about and reflect on their lived experiences and the issues that are important to them in their lives.

The post-program questionnaire asked open-ended questions which revealed that the participating children enjoyed the workshop (“I had a nice and fun day today”). Two of the main ideas that the children said they had learned from the workshop were the importance of respecting others and their ideas and opinions (“everyone can have a different opinion”) and the benefit of working with others (“cooperation is important”). Although the social issues on which the children chose to focus their media campaigns were not always related to inclusion, social justice, and equity, they did incorporate

the children’s own lived experiences with their chosen issue, which proved to be very useful during the workshop. The children especially appreciated the opportunity to discuss and reflect on topics that interest them and that were directly relevant to their lives. For example, they said that the best thing about the workshop was that “we were supposed to give our opinion on life and what seemed to bother us.” The changes made in the third round of testing arguably helped to achieve the intended learning outcomes (“we already know a lot about social media, we can now use it for something useful”). However, the changes may have decreased the children’s overall satisfaction with the workshop itself (“I wish I had had more time to write and think about it”).

4.3. Case Study 3: Learning About Media Through Self-Reflection

The third case study is of a year-long program (in the school year of 2020–2021) that was attended by eight first-year high school students aged 15 to 17 years. It was delivered by the research team at a private lyceum, Naše Lyceum Praha. The course was entitled Information Technologies and Communication. The program was designed to research the youths’ actual media experiences and determine the educational potential of self-reflection by the students about them. The participants attended a total of 32 classes (20 online classes of 45 minutes each and 12 offline classes of 90 minutes each). The classes focused on nurturing the skills students needed for reflection on their media experiences and for deepening their understanding of the relationship between the media and themselves in a broad socio-political, cultural, and cultural-economic context. In the classroom sessions, the students discussed their experience with selected media (film, music, smartphones, etc.) in the light of different theories of obtaining self-knowledge: the “scarf model” (Rock, 2008), “possible selves” (Markus & Nurius, 1986), and “internet psychology” (Amichai-Hamburger, 2017). These theories were introduced in the classes to the students, who then reflected upon the relevance of the theories to their own lived experiences, including those with the media. The participants produced 94 standard pages of reflective accounts altogether. Seven semi-structured interviews (totaling seven hours and 38 minutes) were conducted at both the halfway point of the program and at its end. The interviews focused primarily on evaluating how useful to the students the reflective approach was for gaining an understanding of the media’s role in their lives.

Although students attending a private school (for which they must pay tuition) are not at much risk of social exclusion in terms of their socioeconomic status, they do face other social and individual challenges. The research participants formed a diverse group of international students, students with special needs and learning disabilities (which in some cases had prevented them from

succeeding in the state-funded school system), students suffering from severe mental health problems, and students with previous experience of bullying. The program was entirely based on self-reflection about the adolescents' own media experiences. It allowed them to openly share those experiences, to connect their in-school and out-of-school environments, to reflect on their feelings of belonging and not belonging, and more. Through the process of reflection, they gradually recognized and understood the distribution of power in society and their role in it, while also gaining confidence and the will to take action.

During the first year of the program, which will continue in the coming years, we discovered that the students' media experience was multilayered and affected almost all aspects of their lives. However, it did so in different ways and with different intensities. We identified six layers of the media experience and sorted them from the least intense to the most intense. We preliminarily defined the layers as: (a) ordinary and everyday media experiences ("my [dance] training is on Zoom, where you can share music, so it's all set up"); (b) ambivalent media experiences, meaning that some media are shared, allowed, or even required but other similar media are limited or forbidden without a reason clearly understood by the students (e.g., parents approved and favored a student's watching a Champions League football match on TV with dad late into the evening, but the next day rebuked the student for playing too much FIFA on the computer); (c) media experiences that enhance ontological safety ("the media are like my 'fixed point,' they are how I shape my image and my status....I seek connection and understanding from others through them"); (d) purposefully repeated media experiences ("about two years ago I had a playlist that I made specifically for when I wanted to cry. Most of the time it worked"); (e) intimate media experiences ("it's a zone where I allow myself to be sad and cry"); and (f) spiritual media experiences ("feelings of hopelessness and self-doubt are something that often trouble me....I felt understanding and sadness when the same thing happened to the main character"). These layers are interconnected, overlap, and depend on context. At any given moment, one type of media experience can turn into a different one. For example, an ordinary media experience can offer ontological safety when needed and subsequently turn into a purposefully repeated media experience. As one of the participants noted, using maps on a smartphone is an ordinary media experience unless he is lost. Then using it reassures him and gives him a feeling of safety. Consequently, any time he thinks he might possibly get lost, he uses the map.

It would not be possible to explore the complexity and diversity of youths' media experiences in detail without seeking the students' own active and continuous self-reflection. We devoted significant time and effort to that during the program. At first, the students' reflections on their experiences with media were almost unintelligi-

ble ("you're not used to these questions and the things you look into through these questions. Like the question of what it's like to listen to music opens up a lot of new thoughts for you"). As they became more accustomed to our questions, they felt safer and more capable of giving specific answers ("I think definitely. As time went on, and once I'd got something written down, I had a better ability to just describe those things"). They began to appreciate the program more ("in math, there is a right or wrong answer, but in media education, we didn't have that. And that was the good thing about it. It's an atmosphere where we can make mistakes"). The students' attitudes toward the media changed significantly. Before, it was something that they took for granted. However, through self-reflection, they started to think about media in a completely different way:

Before, the media was really like a newspaper to me, completely dusty somewhere on a shelf, and still behind books [smiles]. I really didn't give it a thought. I had Messenger, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, I had that, I used them often, but I never thought about it in any way.

The students said that self-reflection "opened their eyes" and went significantly beyond just learning about the media. It helped them more generally to improve themselves ("I am able to take a step back and think rationally about a situation, which was something I was not good at before") and their lives ("I think it could help me with my mental health").

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The people at risk of social exclusion in Europe are likely to increase because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the current geopolitical situation. We are aware of the differences between the social, cultural, and economic types of exclusion. However, those types are interconnected and, for each of them, a growing number of authors find a correlation with how media literate people are (Cohen & Kahne, 2012; Mihailidis & Thevenin, 2013). Finding ways to reduce the social, cultural, economic, digital, and all the other gaps in society has grown in importance. Our multi-case study adds to previous research that has found that media education can contribute to a more inclusive society. The data from the Czech Republic is especially valuable because Central Europe is rather underrepresented in this area of research.

Furthermore, we have illustrated different ways in which media education can be researched and practiced. In the first two project-based media education programs, we hoped to answer questions about externally imposed ideas and practices of inclusion that often appear in media education for children and youth. Nurturing students' media literacy, knowledge, agency, and civic participation through such programs is an important way to meaningfully increase social inclusivity (Marci-Boehncke

& Trapp, 2019; Supa et al., 2021). Also, in line with Dewey's (1938, p. 20) theory of experiential learning, we focused on nurturing and respecting the "intimate and necessary relation between the proves of actual experience and education," and providing the students with an opportunity to create media content themselves. However, our programs were rather neglectful of student experiences that were not directly related to the media (e.g., drug use, bullying, imprisoned parents, and divorce) because we wanted the students to be able to achieve our pre-set goals in the short time frame of the programs.

The third program in our case studies, which applied a reflective approach to the media, was by contrast truly inclusive of all the experiences the students themselves identified as important. We gained a profound understanding of the diverse media experiences of learners, and of the researcher/educator as well (Hobbs & Jensen, 2009; Jung et al., 1964; Nagata, 2004). The third media education program brought about gradual transformative changes and gave students a deeper understanding of their life and media experiences. It offered multiple ideas for encouraging future learning (Laal & Salamati, 2012). However, the third program proved to be only marginally linked with an increase in concrete media literacy knowledge and skills. It focused purely on teaching the students to reflect on their complex and multifaceted life with the media (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Woodfall & Zezulkova, 2016; Zezulkova, 2015). As such, it might raise the question of whether it could properly be called media education. Nevertheless, we dare to do so.

Our three case studies promoted inclusive media literacy as it is defined by Neag et al. (2022). The programs were designed for diverse groups of children and youth, including those who may at first not seem to be at risk of exclusion. Their sharing of their lived experiences proved otherwise, and they increased their media literacy along with their respect for inclusivity and diversity. Yet the case studies also demonstrate that the limited time available for the program required compromises. The programs ranged from a three-hour-long workshop to a year-long course of study. Yet even the year-long program was able to cover only a limited range of the media children and youth experience every day. It only provided the students with a basis for meaningful self-reflection. This conclusion comports with other international research, which recommends that media education programs be long-term—two years (Brites & Castro, 2021), three years (Pandya, 2018), or the students' entire lives (Bradbury, 2015, p. 323). Arguably, longer programs can better utilize children's and youths' lived experiences, thereby enhancing their media literacy and their openness to social inclusivity. An additional benefit of longer programs is that children and youth can learn that their own unique experiences in life and the media matter and that they must give the experiences of others equal respect. Either an experiential or a reflective approach will contribute to a more inclusive society

if it is used in a longer-term program. Media education will then support two goals even better, giving everyone the opportunity to become media literate and helping all of society to become more inclusive.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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