



Study Report

PERSPECTIVES ON INCLUSIVE MEDIA EDUCATION AND MEDIA LITERACY

Extended abstract

cupore



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BACKGROUND

Media contents are present in everyone's everyday life and media literacy is an important everyday competence. Media literacy is promoted through media education.

In Finland, the field of media education is broad and many actors in different sectors of society are working on the topic. Media education is offered and conducted for example in early childhood education and care, education, libraries, youth and cultural work. In addition, many actors, such as ministries, agencies and institutions, NGO's, universities and universities of applied sciences, and companies, are developing media education as part of their own activities, for example by creating conditions, providing resources, guidance and opportunities for competence development.

While some have a legal obligation to do so, only a small proportion of media education practitioners work primarily or exclusively on media literacy. In practice, media literacy is part of a wide range of professional activities and media literacy issues are addressed as part of education for arts, democracy, sexuality, global issues, security and the environment, among others.

The legal tasks of the National Audiovisual Institute (KAVI) include promoting media education and a safe media environment for children, and providing information on children and media issues. KAVI's Department for Media Education and Audiovisual Media promotes media education in national level, acts as an expert in the development of the media environment for children in cooperation with other authorities and the field, promotes research in this field and monitors international developments.

In 2019, the Ministry of Education and Culture published the national policy for media education prepared by KAVI. The policy visions to provide comprehensive, high-quality and systematic media education equally for all. However, the policy identify the challenge that not everyone in Finland yet has equal opportunities to participate in media education.

This report addresses the state of media literacy and media education from an equality perspective. It focuses on the inclusiveness of media education, the equality and inclusion of people from different backgrounds in media literacy. It is framed by the rights to equality, freedom of expression and education, which are enshrined in the Finnish Constitution, the Equality Act and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, among others.



CONDUCTING THE REPORT

The report is a qualitative review of work and practices on equality in media education and the promotion of media literacy. Interviews with 17 experts working in different fields of media education and media literacy promotion form the core of the report. The purpose of the interviews is to identify and highlight the realisation of equality and inclusion in media education and the media environment. The study describes the challenges of promoting media literacy and the issues that support equality in media education activities.

The selection of interviewees focused on both those who promote media education in general and those who promote media literacy as part of the social inclusion and equality of their own reference group. The former include, for example, libraries and educational institutions, while the latter include various social organisations and associations representing and working with special or minority groups. The experts interviewed come from the third sector, libraries, media, research and government.

The study was carried out by Anna Kanerva, a senior researcher and researchers Emmi Lahtinen and Katja Oksanen-Särelä at Cupore Cultural Policy Research Centre in collaboration with experts from KAVI. The study was carried out between late autumn 2021 and spring 2022. The study was commissioned and funded by KAVI.



RESULTS

MEDIA EDUCATION AND EQUALITY

From the perspective of promoting equality, the field of media education actors, including the challenges and opportunities of diversity, continues to expand. Challenges identified in the media education policy include limited resources, regional accessibility, inequalities in media access, lack of skills, planning and coordination. Similar opportunities and challenges were also identified in this study.

VALUES AND PRINCIPLES GUIDING MEDIA EDUCATION

The key values that emerged from the study, phrased in slightly different ways, were the equal dignity and value of all human beings and the right to learn and participate in society. The values underpinning media education activities focus on the needs of the individual and on activities that support social inclusion. Examples of objectives mentioned by interviewees include strengthening the skills, capacities and inclusion of participants, improving accessibility, removing barriers and preventing exclusion. The values and objectives set out in their own guiding documents were also seen as contributing to their implementation in the activities themselves.

ORGANISATION OF AND COOPERATION ON MEDIA EDUCATION

Even if the value bases of those organising media education are similar, the starting points, objectives and priorities of those working in the field of media literacy can be different. Not all of them see themselves as doing media education, especially if media education is part of another activity. This can create challenges for collaboration in finding a common language and objectives.

Those active in media education and media literacy promotion are widely networked and collaborate with a wide range of different actors from various sectors. These include schools, libraries, youth services, social and health organisations, ministries, the media, public authorities and various NGOs.

Close and broad, multi-professional cooperation between the different administrative sectors is seen as an important prerequisite for the equal promotion of media literacy.



SUSTAINABILITY AND CONTINUITY OF ACTION

Although many interviewees felt that their work was fairly well resourced, a lack of resources was also identified in the field of media education, which affects the integrity, continuity and diversity of activities. Some needs are more local and practical, while others are linked to the wider context and changes in the environment.

Different actors may have very different levels of technical resources and equipment, affecting, for example, guidance work in the digital environment or workshop activities. Weak resources also have a direct impact on the ability to produce materials in different languages and for different needs, although this is important from an equality perspective.

MEDIA LITERACY AMONG DIFFERENT POPULATION GROUPS

The state of media literacy varies between and within different population groups and communities. Factors such as language, education, socio-economic status, life situation, cultural background, place of residence, health status and age are all factors that can affect one's ability to use, understand and produce media. They are also linked to media consumption patterns and the availability, accessibility and appeal of media education. According to the interviewees, these factors are currently not sufficiently taken into account in media education and its guidance.

KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION NEEDS OF MEDIA EDUCATION PROVIDERS

The study shows that those involved in media education are well aware of the equality and inclusiveness aspects of media literacy and consider these in their daily work. There is a strong sense of the importance of better mainstreaming equality in media literacy activities, and many would also like help in doing so. Different skill needs are related to issues such as working in a digital environment and the rapid changes in the operational environment.

ACCESSIBILITY AND EQUALITY IN MEDIA CULTURE

In the interviews, media education, media literacy and media culture intertwine with equality and accessibility. Media education and the promotion of media literacy create not only the capacity to act, but also the competence to influence media culture. Media education, in turn, takes place in and from the prevailing media culture. An individualistic media culture and the individualisation of media use can lead to a situation where people have fewer opportunities to be exposed to different views and to form a common understanding. In this context of change, the promotion of pluralism, critical media literacy and shared understanding is particularly important. The report shows that equality and accessibility of media culture in Finland has improved, but there is still much work to be done.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS - FACTORS SUPPORTING EQUITY IN MEDIA EDUCATION AND MEDIA LITERACY

Media literacy is an important everyday competence and is linked to building social inclusion and mutual trust. The study shows that the state of media literacy varies widely between and within different groups of people and communities. Factors related to media literacy and media consumption patterns, as well as the accessibility, availability and appeal of media education, are not yet sufficiently taken into account in the funding and organisation of media education. One of the main reasons for this is the lack of knowledge about the target groups who are excluded from media education, their skills, media consumption habits and needs. Increasing knowledge is one of the main factors supporting accessibility and equity in media education, according to the results.

To promote equality, media education should take into account the competences and skills of individuals, which are easily overlooked if only the needs of different population groups as a whole are highlighted. Increased research and the popularisation of research findings into practice is also key to developing more equitable media education approaches and models.

From an inclusiveness perspective, the challenge is often seen as a too narrow understanding of media education, media literacy and the holistic impact of media on people's lives. A more holistic view of the actors involved, of the division of responsibilities and duties, and of the objectives and starting points of the different actors, is therefore needed to promote media education and media literacy in an inclusive way. At present, media education is carried out and implemented individually and separately by a wide range of actors from many different sectors. Organisations working with specific groups and minorities have a lot of practical knowledge, understanding and expertise on the different target groups and on equality and inclusiveness issues.

The importance and relevance of cooperation across administrative boundaries and sectors is underlined in promoting equality in media education. However, closer cooperation would make it possible to create new partnerships between actors from different sectors and to reach people who are easily overlooked in media education.

Developing the inclusiveness of media education activities requires the involvement of non-media education providers in the design of priorities and themes. The expertise of various NGOs, experts and peers should be used to a greater extent in the development of funding, governance and steering of media education. This can be facilitated by effective grassroots contact between the different actors involved in media education.

In general, peer-to-peer activities are seen as a good way to increase accessibility and equity in media literacy. Through peer-to-peer activities, people facing similar challenges can share experiences, and experts can also encourage those in challenging situations by example.

As a public authority, KAVI plays a key role in promoting media education and media literacy in Finland. KAVI's role is seen in particular as organising cooperation and disseminating information. It is also hoped that KAVI will help the actors in the field to act in accordance with national media education policy.

A lack of resources was identified in the field of media education as support is fragmented among many different actors. In developing guidance and funding for media education, it would be important to look at the scope and activities of the different branches of government and the role of media education and media literacy development within them.

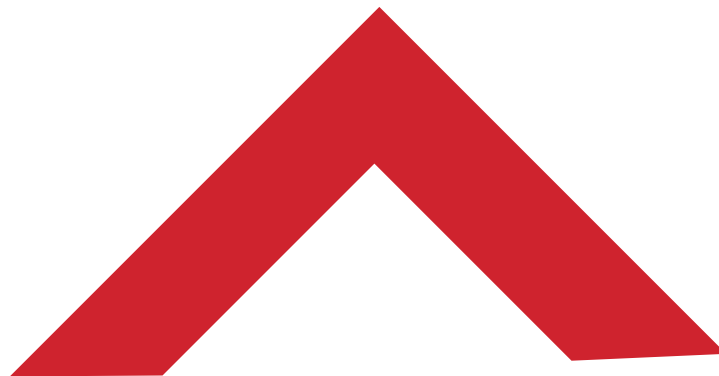
The study found that the values and objectives enshrined in the documents guiding media education activities contribute to equality in practice. In Finland, the organisation of media education and the promotion of equality are protected by law. Increased equality planning, i.e. assessing and reviewing one's own activities from an equality perspective and drawing up equality plans and action plans, could be good ways of promoting equality in media education.

In today's text- and media-driven society, linguistic weaknesses can contribute to exclusion. From an inclusiveness perspective, there was a need for a wider use of plain language in society. Greater use of plain language would support everyone in accessing information, expressing their ideas and participating in public discussion.

There is also a need for more practical support in the form of guidelines and concrete materials that can be used in media education and campaigns. This could include materials and content in their own language for different target groups or easily adaptable and translatable into different languages.

Without accessible and equal media education for all, there will be no pluralistic media culture. To promote accessibility and equality in media culture, it is necessary to increase pluralism by examining the behaviour and attitudes of those who work in society and media culture and those who produce it.

It is essential to increase the understanding that promoting equality and accessibility in media education, media literacy and media culture increases inclusion for all in society and strengthens democracy. Promoting equality and accessibility is not just about specific solutions targeted at certain groups of the population. More broadly, promoting accessibility and equality improves the conditions for all to operate in the media environment and supports empowerment at different stages of life, throughout the life cycle.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Full report (in Finnish):

www.mediataitokoulu.fi/nakokulmia.pdf

Authors of the original report

Anna Kanerva, Senior Researcher

Emmi Lahtinen, Researcher

Katja Oksanen-Särelä, Researcher

Center for Cultural Policy Research Cupore

Media literacy in Finland

For more information about media literacy and media education in Finland:

www.medialukutaitosuomessa.fi/en/

Finnish media literacy policy

Media literacy in Finland is the media literacy policy and the national media education policy document, published by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2019.

Full policy document:

www.medialukutaitosuomessa.fi/mediaeducationpolicy.pdf

Inclusive and Creative Media Education

Inclusive and Creative Media Education ICME (2023-2024) -project aims to develop operational models of innovative media literacy activities that can be shared and scaled up successfully in different media educational contexts crossing cultural, national, and linguistic borders from inclusive and creative perspectives.

For more information:

www.icmeproject.eu

Publisher

The National Audiovisual Institute (KAVI), with its Department for Media Education and Audiovisual Media (MEKU), has a legal task to promote media education in Finland. KAVI is a subordinate of the Ministry of Education and Culture and acts in cooperation with stakeholders.

Contact information in KAVI

www.kavi.fi/en/contact-information/



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