

FINAL REPORT



MEDIA LOGUE
ON PROPAGANDA
An Online Learning Community for Educators



**OPENING A
GLOBAL
CONVERSATION**

**DIGITAL
MEDIA
LITERACY
PEDAGOGY**

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Overview

Propaganda, disinformation, and the changing epistemologies of the information environment are a thorny and meaningful challenge to global peace, and this project focused its efforts on working with an underserved but important target audience of teachers and teacher educators. Medialogues on Propaganda was a year-long, cross-national professional learning community that used innovative approaches to support the learning needs of German and American educators and teacher educators. More than 700 educators had some exposure to one or more of the online programs during the academic year and 36 participants had a deep, intrinsically motivating professional learning experience in the Power of Two program. In Phase 1, which occurred in the Fall/Winter of 2021, educators and teacher educators gathered for Medialogues, a sequence of generative dialogues that used an online webinar format with rich content and pedagogy supplied by a range of media literacy experts. Topics included media bias, disinformation, propaganda, controversial public issues in the classroom, and the cultivation of tolerance and respect through media literacy education. In Phase 2, during the Spring of 2022, The Power of Two program helped participants develop meaningful relationships built on respect and trust as they worked collaboratively to develop lesson plans or class projects linked to the themes of digital and media literacy, propaganda, and disinformation. When the Russia-Ukraine war began, we were responsive to educators' needs and demonstrated an instructional lesson on critically analyzing wartime propaganda. Some educators who met in this program even developed an innovative educational collaboration by planning a new project, and writing a grant that was just recently funded by an education philanthropy. While our total number of German participants was smaller than we had hoped, the cross-cultural dialogue around media literacy education that emerged was beneficial in advancing the collaborative professionalism of all the educators and teacher educators who participated in the program. In this professional learning community, everyone learned from everyone.

The Problem

Two major problems motivated our work on this project: First, new forms of propaganda and disinformation are compromising the quality of people's democratic decision making.¹ Teaching about propaganda and disinformation is challenging and the rise of political polarization has made teaching media literacy controversial.² Secondly, digital and media literacy education are unevenly implemented in schools in Germany, the United States, and around the world.³ In Germany, implementation of media literacy education has lagged as compared to other parts of Europe and the coronavirus pandemic has led to continuing stresses on the education system in Germany.⁴

We designed Medialogues on Propaganda with the belief that teachers who experience sustained, immersive professional learning are likely to develop leadership skills that can transfer to their own settings. Teachers are more likely to enact significant pedagogical change when they get opportunities for experiential learning that makes them feel valued as members of an on-going, inquiry-based learning

¹ Farkas, J., & Schou, J. (2019). *Post-truth, fake news and democracy: Mapping the politics of falsehood*. Routledge.

² Geller, R.C. (2020) Teacher political disclosure in contentious times: A "responsibility to speak up" or "fair and balanced"?, *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 48:2, 182-210, DOI: 10.1080/00933104.2020.1740125

³ Frau-Meigs, D., Velez, I., & Michel, J. F. (Eds.). (2017). *Public policies in media and information literacy in Europe: cross-country comparisons*. Taylor & Francis.

⁴ Blume, C. (2020). German teachers' digital habitus and their pandemic pedagogy. *Postdigital Science and Education* 2, 879–905. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-020-00174-9>

community.⁵ We recognize, of course, that teacher motivation to participate in professional development varies at different stages of the career. Teachers who choose to participate in professional learning programs are often balancing work and family responsibilities, and their time and energy is limited. Norms and expectations about professional development are also culturally varied: German teachers expect to receive professional development during the school day and academic year, while American teachers expect to receive it during the summer.

How could an online professional development program be designed to address these challenges? This report outlines the strategies we used to address this important question and the results we achieved.

German and American Collaboration

Thanks to a grant from the Public Affairs Section of the Berlin Embassy, we invited German, American, and global educators to gather online for a unique approach to professional development during a global pandemic. We created an online learning community by using a highly interactive and participatory approach to webinars combined with a hands-on, activity-based program that enabled us to model and demonstrate how media literacy pedagogy is applied to the most urgent and relevant topics facing society today, including media bias, election propaganda, disinformation, and political polarization.

The [Medialogues on Propaganda](#) program was designed to advance the quality of media literacy education in Germany by developing the knowledge, confidence, and leadership skills of German and American teachers and teacher educators. Seven free online webinars were offered in the summer and fall of 2021, followed by four free events that were offered in the Spring 2022 semester. In this final report, we review our experience in developing and implementing the program. We share observations about the program based on the quantitative and qualitative evidence we have gathered and the experiences we have had. Our team leaders included:

- Renee Hobbs is an internationally recognized expert in digital and media literacy education, author of 12 books on the topic. She is Professor of Communication Studies at the University of Rhode Island, where she directs the Media Education Lab.
- Silke Grafe is Professor of Education at the University of Wuerzburg (JMU), Germany where she is Director of the Media Education and Educational Technology Lab MEET and the Competence Center for Digital Teaching and Learning at JMU. Her research interests include media literacy education in schools and teacher education in an international and interdisciplinary perspective.
- Troy Hicks, PhD, is Professor of English and Education at Central Michigan University, where he collaborates with K–12 colleagues to explore how they implement newer literacies in their classrooms and teaches master’s and doctoral courses in educational technology and media literacy.
- Bekir Cakmak (University of Wuerzburg) served as lead researcher for this program.
- PhD students Kristina Förster and Jannis Hahn (University of Wuerzburg) served as research associates for the program.

⁵ Girvan, C., Conneely, C., & Tangney, B. (2016). Extending experiential learning in teacher professional development. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 58, 129-139.

We are happy to report that our colleague Bekir Cakmak has arrived safely at the University of Wuerzburg after escaping Turkey where he had experienced a credible threat that was assessed by the Scholars at Risk Network (SAR). He has received an award from the Philipp Schwartz Initiative, a program of the Humboldt Foundation that enables universities and research institutions in Germany to host researchers at risk. He is now in residence in Wuerzburg as a member of Dr. Grafe's research team.

Digital Learning During a Global Pandemic

COVID-19 affected schools and universities in Germany, the United States, and around the world throughout the 2021-2022 school year. During the first and second waves of the pandemic, German educators struggled to support students during the school closures and teachers only carried out a fraction of their usual teaching operations during the school closures. For example, only 29% of students had online classes more than once a week, and only 6% had them daily. Students had even less individual contact with their teachers: Only 17% had contact more than once a week.⁶ Many school leaders were unable to compensate for the loss of in-person instructional time with appropriate distance-teaching concepts.⁷

Even before COVID-19, Germany had a school system with a rather low degree of digital and virtual schooling, at least compared to other EU member states. Only 1 in 3 students has access to online learning platforms, compared with more than half in other countries across the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.⁸ The pandemic placed a public spotlight on the need for digital infrastructure and teacher training. The practice of teacher preparation was also impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic because most face-to-face courses were replaced by online education.

To be successful in digital learning, new ways of communicating become important. In a study of high school students in eight German federal states, most reported daily delivery of learning material by email. But students wished for a stronger personal exchange between teachers and students to intensify digital learning.⁹ As researchers from the Center for Economic Studies and ifo Institute in Munich explain, the pandemic's new distance-teaching requirements impacted "the stress situation and mental health of teachers themselves, which may partly depend on whether the teachers have to care for their own children at home during the time of distance teaching."¹⁰ In the Fall of 2021 and the Spring of 2022, new laws were passed in Germany to limit school closures. But in Saxony, more than 100 schools were placed under temporary restrictions for specific classes, age groups, and even entire schools. According to Germany's Conference of Education Ministers, 45,500 school-age children were registered as infected,

⁶ Grewenig, E., Lergetporer, P., Werner, K., Woessmann, L. and Zierow, L. (2020). *COVID-19 and educational inequality: how school closures affect low- and high-achieving students*. CESifo Working Paper 8648.

⁷ Freundl, V., Lergetporer, P., & Zierow, L. (2021). Germany's education policy during the COVID-19 crisis. *Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft*, 31(1), 109-116.

⁸ Chu, L. (2021, March 30). Germany has money. Why don't its schools have computers? *Christian Science Monitor*.

⁹ Anger, S., Dietrich, H., Patzina, A., Sandner, M., Lerche, A., Bernhard, S., & Toussaint, C. (2020). School closings during the COVID-19 pandemic: Findings from German high school students. In *IAB-Forum. Nuremberg: Institute for Employment Research of the Federal Employment Agency*.

¹⁰ Werner, K. & Woessmann, L. (2021). The Legacy of Covid-19 in Education, CESifo Working Paper, No. 9358, Center for Economic Studies and ifo Institute (CESifo), Munich.

and 87,000 out of 10 million were in quarantine.¹¹ In May 2022, there were more than 44,000 new cases daily and at least 1 in 3 Germans have been infected, a total of 26 million cases.¹²

Even before the pandemic, many German teachers held skeptical perspectives towards technology innovation in education. Indeed, German educators have increasing concern about privacy and security issues related to technology in general, with some demonstrating reluctance to use digital tools for fear of legal repercussions.¹³ Researchers have also described the mismatch between the digital competencies of students and teachers in relation to digital learning.¹⁴

Yet, the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic also created opportunities for online professional learning. A review of the German research literature shows that teachers and teacher educators were challenged to deal the design of teaching and learning processes in the digital world in a very fundamental, forward-looking, and responsible way.¹⁵ Against the backdrop of the pandemic, educators felt pressure to shift to digital teaching and learning formats both in the K-12 context¹⁶ and in university teaching.¹⁷ Despite challenges, some teacher educators were able to pivot to online learning. Research found that exposure to online learning during the pandemic did contribute to pre-service teachers' intentions to use digital learning materials in the future.¹⁸ However, researchers also stress the importance of exploring innovative ways of conceptualizing teaching and learning with and about digital media.¹⁹ For these reasons, we were committed to explore the potential of innovative approaches to addressing teachers' need to advance the media literacy competencies of teachers and teacher educators, in Germany, the United States, and around the world.

Apart from extraordinary job stresses, teachers and teacher educators in Germany have different expectations for professional development. The fragmentation of the German teacher education system with its several different regulations for obligatory professional development in the various Federal States meant that the Medialogues program was perceived by teachers, to use an idiom, as "above and beyond the call of duty." In addition, professional development programs for educators in Germany usually take place during the school day.

In light of the pandemic conditions that continued around the world throughout the 2021-22 academic year, our goal to develop an innovative cross-national approach to professional development in higher education during the pandemic can be understood as disruptive.²⁰ During the time period in which

¹¹ Scholz, K. (2021, November 19). COVID and Kids: How is the Fourth Wave Affecting German Schools? DW.

<https://www.dw.com/en/covid-and-kids-how-is-the-fourth-wave-affecting-german-schools/a-59883>

¹² New York Times (2022, May 23). <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/world/germany-covid-cases.html>

¹³ Chivot, E. (2019, July 31). [How Hesse's privacy ban on school software hurts students](#). The Local.

¹⁴ Blume, C. German Teachers' Digital Habitus and Their Pandemic Pedagogy. *Postdigital Science and Education* 2, 879–905 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-020-00174-9>

¹⁵ Van Ackeren, I., Aufenanger, S., Eickelmann, B., Friedrich, S., Kammerl, R., Knopf, J., ... & Scheika, H. (2019). Digitalisierung in der Lehrerbildung: Herausforderungen, Entwicklungsfelder und Förderung von Gesamtkonzepten. *DDS—Die Deutsche Schule*, 111(1), 103-119, p. 106.

¹⁶ Dreer, B., & Kracke, B. (2021). Lehrer* innen im Corona-Lockdown 2020. *Das Bildungssystem in Zeiten der Krise*, 45.

¹⁷ Kehrer, M., & Thillosen, A. (2021). Hochschulbildung nach Corona—ein Plädoyer für Vernetzung, Zusammenarbeit und Diskurs. In *Wie Corona die Hochschullehre verändert* (pp. 51-70). Springer Gabler, Wiesbaden.

¹⁸ Paetsch J, & Drechsel B. (2021) Factors Influencing Pre-service Teachers' Intention to Use Digital Learning Materials: A Study Conducted During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Germany. *Frontiers of Psychology* 2(12):733830. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.733830.

¹⁹ Handke, J., Loviscach, J., Reinmann, G. & Thillosen, A. (2020, 08. Juli). Sharing Digital Teaching Experiences (Teil 2) [Online-Event]. In e-teaching.org, Gesellschaft für Medien in der Wissenschaft e.V. & Hochschulforum Digitalisierung, Qualifizierungsspecial Quickstarter Online-Lehre. <https://e-teaching.org/quickol-10>.

²⁰ Hauenschild, W., Mürmann, M., & Wildt, J. (2021). Transformation hochschuldidaktischer Weiterbildung unter Corona-Bedingungen. In *Hochschule auf Abstand* (pp. 203-222). transcript Verlag.

we worked, a face-to-face teacher education program would have been unlikely to be successful. Under the circumstances, we are grateful that we were able to have as successful a program with Medialogues as we did, which we outline in more detail below.

Project Goals and Learning Outcomes

These goals reflected our interest in focusing on the learning needs of teachers and teacher educators:

1. **Increase people’s resilience to new forms of contemporary propaganda and disinformation.** Participants should demonstrate growth over time in generating “how” and “why” questions when they encounter new forms of propaganda and disinformation, applying media literacy concepts like representation, audience, purpose, economics, techniques, and context.
2. **Expand the number of current and future teachers in Germany with expertise in media literacy education.** Participants should attend webinars and complete an implementation plan working with a partner and supported by a coach. Participants may choose to share their work with peers and public audiences.

In designing this professional learning experience, we took into consideration cultural differences between German and American conceptualizations of media literacy. For this reason, our learning outcomes included the following goals. We aimed for participants to:

- Know how media messages are constructed and how to assess their credibility
- Challenge harmful forms of contemporary propaganda and disinformation
- Integrate media literacy concepts and pedagogy into the curriculum
- Use digital media tools for learning
- Gain knowledge of theoretical concepts in media literacy
- Gain knowledge about algorithmic personalization in media
- Closely analyze media bias, disinformation, or propaganda
- Gain knowledge about games designed to introduce key features of disinformation
- Develop knowledge, confidence, and leadership skills in presenting ideas to global peers.

Our work developed in two phases, with Phase 1 occurring from June to December 2021 and Phase 2 occurring from January to April 2022. In addition to our team’s own weekly planning sessions, and as described in more detail below, a top-level summary of the 11 Medialogues on Propaganda events are summarized in Table 1. The light gray areas represent work in the fall; the medium gray represents the reflection and transition in December; and the darker gray represents the four collaborative work sessions in the spring. We describe these phases in more detail below.

Table 1

Medialogues on Propaganda Events

June 22, 2021	October 7	October 19	November 2	November 16	December 1
Opening a Global Conversation	Teaching the Controversies	Ad Fontes: To the Source	Digital Diligence	Data Detox x Youth	MEET Tolerance
December 16	Jan. 25, 2022	February 15	March 8	April 26	May 31
Community Reflections	The Power of Two	Generating Questions	Propaganda in Wartime	What We Learned Together	Project Completed

Medialogues Phase 1 Program Format

Educators are highly familiar with the webinar as a “listen and learn” experience. But many have less experience with an online program that is built with the expectation of active participation. The program structure we used emphasized community building, networking and information sharing among participants, creating a more energetic, informal, and engaged tone than a typical webinar. We avoided a “transmission only” approach to model best practices for online learning. In the space of a 60-minute webinar format, we used a regular structure that gradually became familiar to participants. It included these components:

- **Overview.** We offered an introduction and preview of the program, followed by a brief introduction of the guest presenter. We thanked the U.S. Embassy in Berlin, Public Affairs Section for their support.
- **Content and Activity.** The guest presenter spoke for 20 – 30 minutes and offered information and modeled instructional practices with the large group. We asked open-ended questions to be answered by participants in the chat. Most presenters demonstrated lesson plans or classroom activities during this time. Chat discussions were moderated by team members and generally very lively, with participants including comments, links to resources, and reactions to ideas.
- **Small Group Breakout Groups.** Participants were randomly assigned to a small group breakout rooms of 4 to 6 people for a discussion lasting about 15 - 20 minutes. Here they introduced themselves and discussed questions that were related to the topic explored by the presenter. In some sessions, they worked collaboratively on a model lesson or activity that involved the use of a digital platform.

- ***Time for Reflection and Synthesis.*** For the final 10 minutes of the program, the large group re-assembled and both participants and program leaders reflected on key ideas that emerged during the small group discussions.
- ***Website Archive.*** We maintained a website for this project: www.medialogues.de where all relevant program content was made available to the public. Medialogues programs were video recorded (except for the small group discussion component and the Community Reflections program) and uploaded to YouTube. We had technical problems with editing one of the sessions, but the other video recordings can be accessed from the [Medialogues website](http://www.medialogues.de). We did not record or archive the Power of Two program because they were primarily dialogic in nature, as small group breakout groups represented most of the one-hour program.

Program Content

Opening a Global Conversation. In “Opening a Global Conversation” on June 22, 2021, Dr. Luisa Conti, a researcher and lecturer specializing in intercultural dialogue in digital settings at the Department of Intercultural Studies at the University of Jena, Germany. In this session, Dr. Conti invited participants to explore issues related to building trust and commitment to online dialogue by first considering digital artifacts such as a meme, news item, or photo as a way to explore their own perspectives on the media. Then, through a facilitated dialogue, participants discussed similarities and differences in digital and face-to-face communications (and why some elements don’t always work as well as we would expect). Finally, participants were introduced to the idea of “intercultural dialogic competence” and welcomed to join a year-long learning community for teachers and teacher educators.

Teaching the Controversies. On October 7, 2021, Diana E. Hess, PhD, offered a presentation. She is the dean of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin (UW) –Madison and holds the Karen A. Falk Distinguished Chair of Education. How do educators deal with controversial issues in the classroom and with the challenges they raise? Dr. Hess explained how social issues can be perceived as “open” or “settled,” depending on whether there is ongoing controversy about the topic at a particular moment in time. In small groups, participants shared their perception of the current “open” controversies in their schools and communities. Dr. Hess then offered practical strategies for teaching the controversies, using dialogue and discussion in the practice of civic and democratic education.

Ad Fontes: To the Source. On October 19, 2021, Vanessa Otero presented a Medialogues webinar. She is the creator of the Media Bias Chart and the Founder and CEO of Ad Fontes Media. See Figure 1. In this session, participants learned about how the concept of media bias is formulated in relation to political bias (ranging from extreme liberal to extreme conservative ideologies) as this intersects with source reliability (ranging from fact-based reporting to propaganda). Vanessa modeled instructional practices for using the Media Bias Chart, learning how to identify bias through careful examination of the language of multiple articles within a particular media outlet. Participants discussed how the concept of media bias can be integrated into language and social studies classes at both secondary and university levels. They recognized how metacognition about one’s own biases are important when exploring the topic of bias in the classroom.

Digital Diligence. On November 2, 2021, Troy Hicks, PhD, offered a Medialogues webinar. He is a professor of English and Education at Central Michigan University and focuses his work on the teaching of writing, literacy and technology, and teacher education and professional development. Digital diligence is an alert, intentional stance that helps both teachers and students use technology productively,

ethically, and responsibly. It includes exploration of online privacy, minimizing digital distraction, breaking through “filter bubbles,” fostering civil conversations, evaluating information on the Internet, creating meaningful digital writing, and deeply engaging with multimedia texts. In this session, the presenter modeled a comparison-contrast activity to explore ideological framing. Working in small groups, participants used discussion to analyze German and international news articles. Participants used a chart of 17 ideological markers to analyze news headlines using Voyant, a tool for identifying language patterns in text. See Figure 2. Analysis of news headlines showed how tone is conveyed through nuances of data, evidence, and language choice.

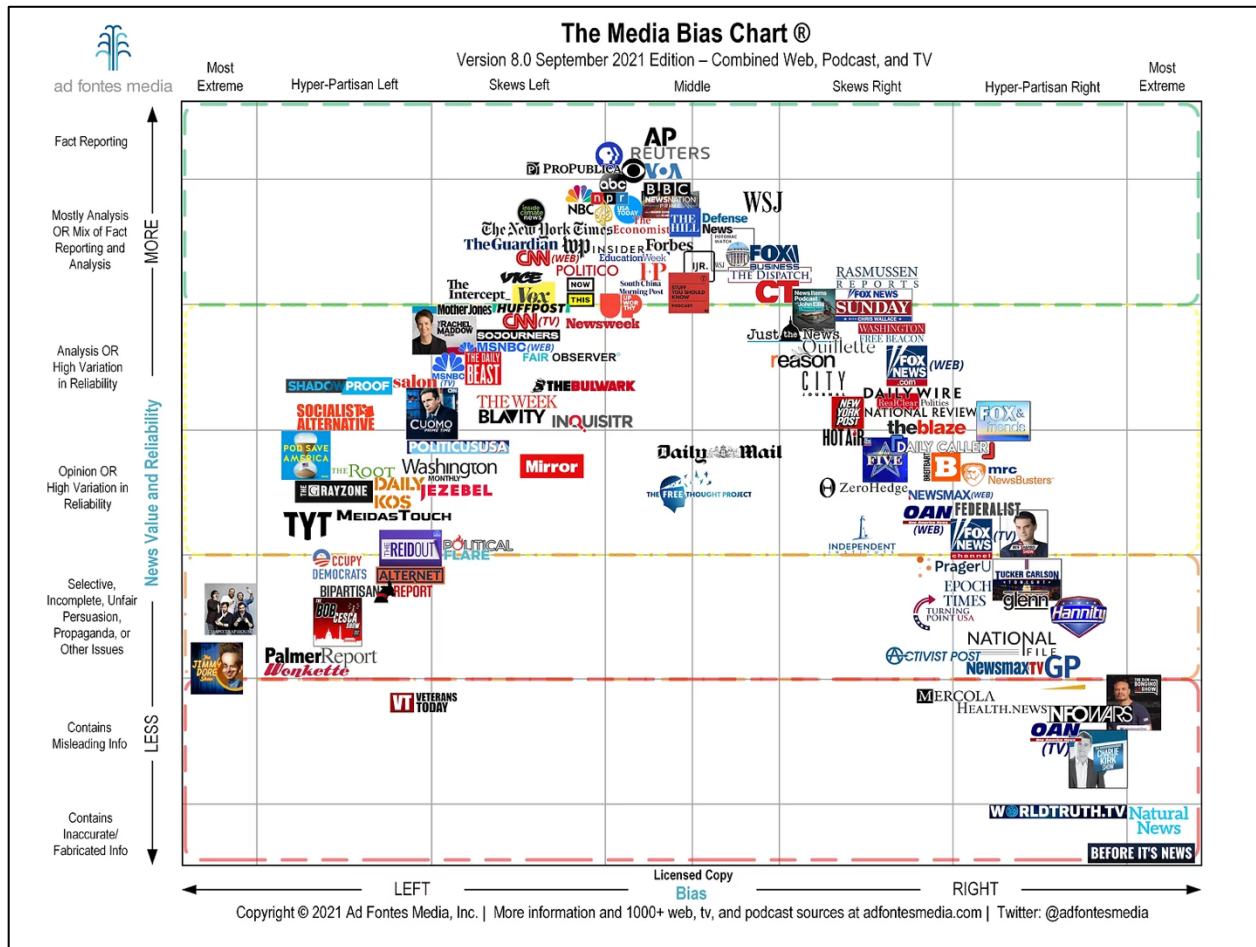


Figure 1. In Ad Fontes: To the source, participants explored the Media Bias Chart, a tool for identifying how partisanship and journalistic credibility intersect.

Data Detox x Youth. On November 16, 2021, Daisy Kidd presented a Medialogues workshop. She is the Educational Coordinator of Tactical Tech, a Berlin-based NGO that engages with citizens and civil-society organizations to explore and mitigate the impacts of technology on society. Ms. Kidd demonstrated the key features of the Data Detox x Youth, a curriculum which is available in English, German and other languages. The resources offer clear suggestions and concrete steps to help people harness all aspects of their online lives, making more informed choices and changing their digital habits in ways that suit them. In small group discussions, participants reviewed three lessons on digital identity, filter bubbles, and our love-hate relationship with algorithms and surveillance capitalism.

MEET Tolerance. On December 1, 2021, Maria Ranieri, PhD, presented a Medialogues workshop. She is a Professor of Education, Media and Technology at the University of Florence, Italy, specializing in the theory and methodology of media and technology in education. She has worked on and coordinated a number of European research projects on media, learning, technology and social inclusion, including Media Education for Equity and Tolerance (2016- 2019), which provides teachers with learning resources suitable for use in the classroom. The resources are translated into German, Italian, English and other languages. In this webinar, you'll get a chance to explore and discuss the role of online games for disinformation. Participants played “Go Viral” and discussed the role of games in introducing students to key aspects of disinformation.

Community Reflections. In preparing our learning community to make a pivot to a more intensive style of professional learning, we held a session on December 16, 2021. Team members Renee Hobbs, Silke Grafe, Troy Hicks and Kristina Foerster reviewed some of the ideas and pedagogies that were showcased in the Fall programs, and participants used small group discussion to answer the question, “What could you do with a partner that you could not do on your own?” The session previewed the key features of Phase 2 of the program, entitled The Power of Two, where educators collaborate to design, implement, and assess a media literacy lesson on themes related to disinformation, fake news, and propaganda. At this session, we invited participants to join us for informal interviews so we could support their continued participation in the Spring 2022 semester.



Figure 2. In Digital Diligence, participants explored practices of identifying ideology and point of view through a critical reading practice that involved the use of Voyant, a tool for identifying language patterns in text.

Phase 1 Participation Data

We estimate the total program impact for Fall 2021 at 709 people based on webinar attendance and video viewing behavior. As Table 2 shows, a total of 497 people registered for one or more webinars during the Fall 2021 semester and 309 people participated in one or more programs. A total of 400 people viewed the recordings on YouTube.

To honor GDPR and ethical principles of research, we asked people to voluntarily indicate their country of residence, but fewer than 50% of participants provided this data. Thus, it was not possible to identify all participants by location.

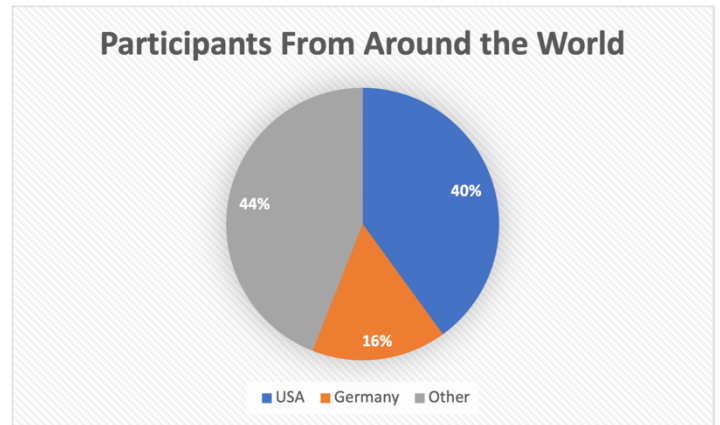


Figure 3. Known Geographic Location of Participants. Only 50% of participants provided geographic information.

Table 2

Phase 1 Medialogues on Propaganda Program

PROGRAM	DATE	REGISTERED	ATTENDED	VIDEO VIEWS* as of May 24, 2022
Opening a Global Conversation	June 22, 2021	79	43	44
Teaching the Controversies	October 7, 2021	72	72	89
Ad Fontes: To the Source	October 19, 2021	89	44	123
Digital Diligence	November 2, 2021	65	39	64
Data Detox x for Youth	November 16, 2021	87	57	80
MEET Tolerance	December 1, 2021	53	29	Not recorded due to technical problems
Community Reflection	December 13, 2021	52	25	Not recorded due to dialogic nature of program
Subtotals		497	309	400
TOTAL				709

Among those who provided geographic data, we were able to identify 50 total German participants during the Fall semester, representing 16% of the total number of participants. However, we may be undercounting German participants because we observed that some participants who resided in Germany did not use email extensions with .de. Among the other participants, 40% resided in the United States and

40% came from other countries including Brazil, Romania, Croatia, India, Canada, Italy, Lithuania, Cameroon, Cyprus, Egypt, and Macedonia.

Adult learning communities form when people freely choose to come together to learn. Medialogues on Propaganda was not a required program, and no one was coerced into participating. We reviewed attendance data to create a measure of *depth of participation*, enabling us to determine whether a learning community was forming during Phase 1. During the fall events, 171 participants attended one webinar. 51 participants attended two or three events, and 16 participants attended four or more webinars. Thus, participants' decision to continue participate in the programs during Phase 1 provided good evidence of the perceived value of the program. We observed that regular participants enjoyed encountering people who had participated in previous program sessions as well as meeting those who were new to the program.

Interlude: Planning for Phase 2

While our work in the fall — sharing a great deal of media literacy content in the form of interactive webinars and supporting initial collaborations through informal dialogue — was fulfilling, we realized when writing our interim report that participants were unlikely to engage as deeply in the process of developing their own lesson plans, media artifacts, or other resources unless we changed both the content and the approach. From our work in the fall, we had observed that participants appreciated the opportunity to interact with peers from different regions and parts of the world. Classroom teachers, teacher educators, librarians, college faculty, graduate students and non-profit education professionals were grateful to meet others who shared their interests in media literacy, propaganda, and disinformation. For this reason, in January 2022, we used the interlude to undertake a needs analysis to identify the common challenges, expectations and needs of Medialogues project participants, gathering information from interviews and a survey.

Interviews. We conducted 35 individual interviews with German, American, and global educators including middle school and high school teachers, university faculty, and teacher educators. We wanted to better understand their needs for professional development so that we could design the Phase 2 learning experience. Among this group, 10 were from German schools and universities, 14 were from American schools and universities, and 11 were from countries including India, Brazil, Bulgaria, Egypt, and China. In a semi-structured interview, we asked them to describe their goals for their own learning, their interest in collaboration, and the context of their students and their school. These interviews helped us understand the value of helping educators develop meaningful partnerships, where they could design, implement, and assess a learning experience that was relevant and meaningful to their work context.

We learned about the challenges of teaching and learning during the pandemic, as we expected. But we also collected evidence that educators were open to using a collaborative process to develop their knowledge and skills. Of note, a German middle school teacher asserted in her interview that a collaboration with a middle school from the U.S. would be of great interest to initiate an intercultural dialogue about digital propaganda. A high school teacher made the point that knowledge about propaganda and racism from a U.S. perspective could bring helpful insights for media literacy curriculum development in the English as a foreign language classroom.

German educators also explained why it was difficult for them to participate. Some teachers felt overwhelmed by the workload which was caused by the pandemic. In addition to their 23-28 hours teaching per week, additional grading and counseling, German teachers had to test the pupils of their

classes three times a week, substitute teaching for colleagues on sick leave and develop e-learning content for homeschooling. The interviews helped to shed light on a time of crisis for German teachers. Also, as an added benefit, these interviews helped deepen relationships with participants which led to the start of a collaboration project between a US middle school and a German middle school after the end of the program.

Survey. We designed and implemented a short survey with closed and open-ended questions in January 2022, which was designed for members who had participated at least in one of the webinars in Phase 1. This survey data provided us with more details about the demographic characteristics of the Medialogues community. Overall, 34 different participants from four continents took part in the survey. In total, 62% worked in educational institutions (in pre-school, primary, secondary, or higher education). Moreover, we found it compelling that 38% of participants operated in non-profit cultural or civic organizations and media companies.

To prepare for Phase 2, we were interested in learning more about the participants' needs and preferences. Survey evidence was also used to collect pre-test data, which is presented below in the program evaluation. Results revealed that participants were interested in practice-based, rather than in theory-oriented guidance. While 53% indicated they were not interested in the thematization of *theoretical media literacy frameworks*, nearly two-thirds – including those who did not come from an educational background – indicated interest in learning more about the *assessment and evaluation* of media literacy skills, and in finding ways to integrate media literacy into their curriculum. Also, more than half of the participants signaled their interest to *analyze misinformation, disinformation, and fake news*.

Evidence from the survey suggested that most participants were unfamiliar with collaboration as a form of professional development. Only 24% of participants indicated that the opportunity to socially interact and communicate online was a relevant motivation. Participants self-identified as *information-seekers*, with a need to find out more about new ways and strategies to put media literacy into their practice. Still, we have to speculate that — at least to some extent — the manner in which we engaged participants in a collaborative, social model of learning through our webinar series may have contributed to their overall interest in continuing with the program.

In order to set up Phase 2, in which the participants would be supported through a process of coaching, we asked for the most important attributes that they were looking for in a coach. It became clearly recognizable that the participants were rather seeking for a coach who would actively support them in the development and implementation of media literacy projects than for a coach who would listen to their concerns about media literacy or support them in the development of technological skills. Participants requested coaches who would encourage them to *try out new ideas* related to media literacy, who would help them *find and design lessons* and curriculum, or who could help them with media literacy *assessment*.

Asynchronous Participation Options. We recognized that challenges associated with time differences had the potential to affect and limit partnerships. There were scheduling limitations of synchronous meetings that may have affected participation during the Fall semester. We selected the time of 6 PM CET because it was a time occurring after the workday for German educators. The time was 9 AM for Americans in California (PST) and 12 noon for Americans in Boston (EST), which limited the participation of classroom teachers there. Many participants were teacher educators and other higher education faculty, as well as people from NGOs, graduate students, community leaders, and parents. We

experimented with holding the program on different days of the week to determine whether this affected participation, but we could not detect important differences.

To address the limitations of synchronous programs, we developed a learning management system for Phase 2 to facilitate communication and collaboration among team members as well as instructional coaching. When selecting digital tools and designing the environment, we considered and weighed various aspects. On the one hand, the personal data of the participants should be protected in accordance with GDPR. We were able to ensure this by relying on licenses secured by and protected server space available at the University of Wuerzburg. OpenWueCampus is a comprehensive LMS that enables collaboration beyond the University of Wuerzburg. Secondly, it was important in the decision-making process that the access barriers for participants were as low as possible. OpenWueCampus allows external users to create a new account on their own. Since the platform has only been used sporadically for international collaboration so far, we produced two English-language explanatory videos, placed them on the project homepage, briefly introduced them in our Community Reflections webinar and offered contact options for additional technical support.

Phase 2: The Power of Two

In the spring program, we wanted participants to deepen their relationships with colleagues through dialogue and discussion that led to the development of a collaboratively created project. We presented these goals to participants:

- **Gain** knowledge and develop your professional expertise
- **Encounter** examples of media literacy pedagogy as applied to topics including media bias, disinformation, and propaganda
- **Appreciate** the power of intercultural dialogue to build cultural understanding
- **Expand** your professional network and develop trusted relationships with people from around the world
- **Create** or expand on educational projects that advance media literacy locally and globally

To accomplish these goals, we altered the monthly webinar program format to include two small group breakout sessions, provided more time for participants to discuss ideas and explore common interests. The first three spring sessions — January’s “The Power of Two,” February’s “Generating Questions,” and March’s “Propaganda in Wartime” used a brief introductory activity that scaffolded participation in small group breakouts. This was followed by a more open-ended use of breakout rooms where partners could plan and discuss ideas for a collaborative final project. In each session, participants had about 40 minutes to work in small groups.

Generating Questions. Because we wanted to gather informal evidence of how participants generate “how” and “why” questions when they encounter new forms of propaganda and disinformation, we developed a session entitled “Generating Questions.” Participants were given an opportunity to work collaboratively to discuss social media artifacts about propaganda and disinformation, helping to cultivating feelings of trust and respect that are necessary for creative collaborations to form. In this small group activity, participants worked with a partner to annotate a social media post of their choice, generating questions through discussion. Participants worked together to write down as many interesting questions as they could, without trying to answer questions. Then they indicated the most interesting

questions that they would like to discuss or explore further. We used this activity to gain useful evidence to demonstrate how participants used “how” and “why” questions to activate media literacy competencies.

Question generation is an essential competency of teaching and learning. In some ways teachers are “professional question makers” because asking questions is one of the basic ways by which the teacher stimulates student thinking and learning. Questions can tap into analytic, creative, or evaluative thinking, and they help students demonstrate their ability to interpret and comprehend new information. They can also cue students to elaborate on an initially weak response, help to create a discussion atmosphere, stimulate a sense of curiosity, and guide students’ learning through a process. Because the content of media literacy lessons is ever-changing in response to current events and social trends, the pedagogical practice of using inquiry to advance critical thinking is a key competency for teachers. When teachers are confident in generating questions, they may encourage their students to do the same.²¹

We counted the number of questions developed in the “Generating Questions” activity and classified those questions that used “how” or “why” formulation, since these tend to result in open-ended responses with multiple answers. Among 11 groups, there were 122 questions generated, and 23% of them consisted of ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions. Figure 4 shows one example of questions generated by one team. A review of the entire corpus of questions suggests that partners approached this task somewhat playfully and appreciated the chance to try out questions that might (or might not) be productive in a classroom setting.

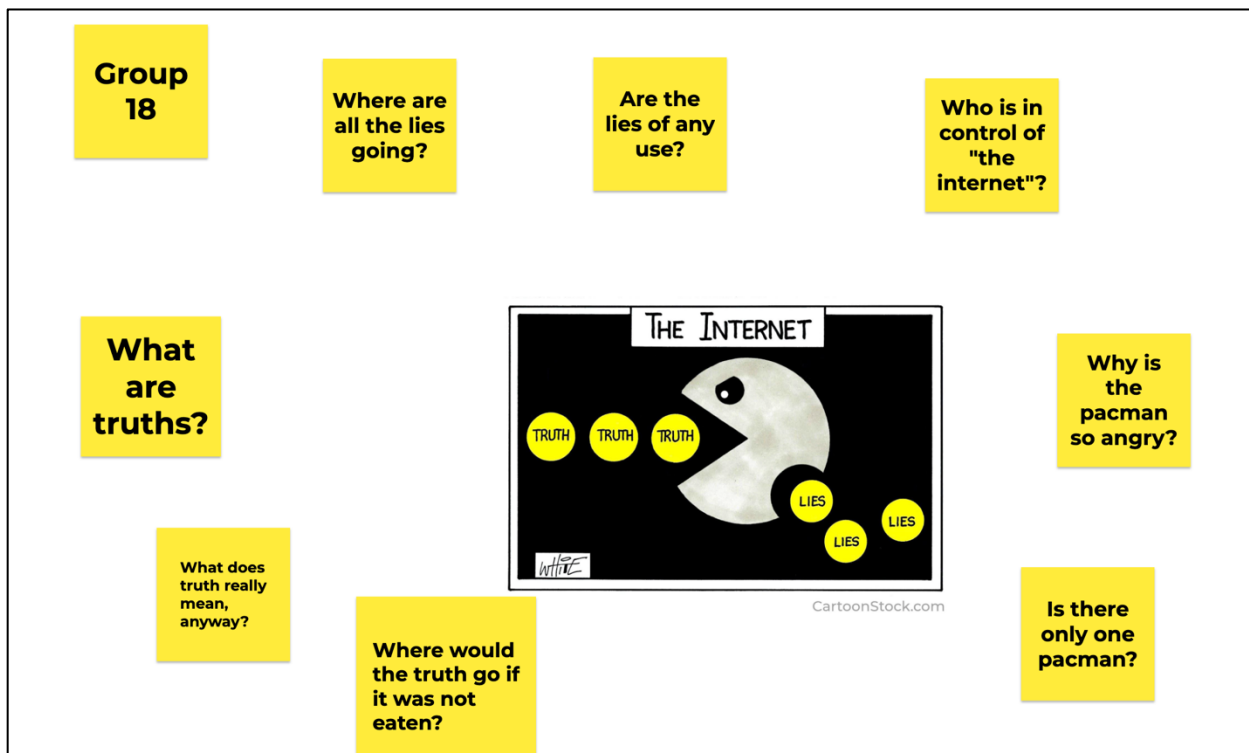


Figure 4. In *Generating Questions*, small groups worked collaboratively on a digital bulletin board to analyze social media artifacts on propaganda, generating questions as they engaged in discussion.

²¹ Aflalo, E. (2021). Students generating questions as a way of learning. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 22(1), 63-75.

Propaganda in Wartime. When Ukraine was invaded in early March, we make a pivot to include a session on “Propaganda in Wartime.” The program was designed as a direct response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and we examined a variety of social media posts that had been created in just the past few days to apply media literacy competencies to a contemporary event. Figure 5 shows an example of an activity that helped participants flex their critical thinking skills in response to new forms of propaganda. We were heartened by our colleagues’ active participation in this activity, and their ability to think through ideas that could immediately be taken into their own classrooms to help their K12 students make sense of the information — and misinformation — related to the invasion, a particularly important topic given Russia’s internal wartime propaganda machine and denial of press freedom.

The author of this post is sharing an article from the New York Times about the Z image as a form of propaganda.

Created by Kremlin

AUTHOR

PURPOSE Communicate support and convey appreciation for the war

TECHNIQUES Inspire feelings of loyalty and unify Russians who support the invasion

a tweet about the propaganda could increase the visibility propaganda

IMPORTANT TO NOTE: A news story about propaganda is not propaganda

BUT IT COULD FUNCTION AS PROPAGANDA FOR SOME READERS!

nytimes.com
The letter 'Z' has become a symbol for Russians who support the inva...
The letter, painted on Russian military vehicles, is suddenly ubiquitous in Russia, prompting talk of a Kremlin public relations campaign.

607 1,459 4,298

Figure 5. In *Wartime Propaganda*, small groups worked collaboratively on a digital bulletin board to analyze social media artifacts on propaganda, analyzing the author purpose, and techniques used to persuade.

The final event in April, “What We Learned Together” offered a showcase event where participant groups shared their final projects, as outlined in more detail below. These were 3-5 minute presentations from each group, highlighting their collaborative experience and sharing resources with fellow Medialogues participants. These presentations served as strong evidence that the program cultivated leadership capacity through the process of collaboration.

Phase 2 Participation Data

As Table 3 shows, program impact for The Power of Two was focused on depth of participation. A total of 75 people registered for one or more webinars during the Spring 2022 semester. Because the Power of Two program was designed to advance participants’ capacity to implement media literacy with a partner or in a small group, regular attendance was highly beneficial. For this reason, measures of *depth of participation* help us assess whether the program achieved its objectives. We counted the number of

participants who attended most and least regularly. There were 23 participants with a high depth of participation, who attended 3 or 4 events. There were 13 participants with medium depth of participation, who attended 2 events. In the lowest level of participation, 39 participants attended 1 event. Because these programs were so focused on small group discussion, we did not record them on YouTube.

Table 3

Phase 2: The Power of Two

PROGRAM	DATE	ATTENDED
The Power of Two	January 25, 2022	58
Generating Questions	February 14, 2022	42
Propaganda in Wartime	March 8, 2022	27
What We Learned Together	April 26, 2022	51
Total Number of Participants		75

Coaching

With individualized coaching and support, participants were able to deepen their understanding of how to integrate media literacy concepts and pedagogy into their curriculum in ways that are responsive to the unique needs of their learners. The small group coaching offered opportunities for cross national dialogue between German and American educators and supported participants in developing instructional resources and lesson plans. We used Zoom, email and the WueCampus platform as tools to support the coaching process. The coaching process led to increased trust and respect between participants and coaches, which supported the community building process.

Team leaders who conducted interviews also supported participants during the Phase 2 program, working with 11 groups in 28 coaching sessions of individualized professional learning during the Spring 2022 semester. The collaborative learning space which permitted asynchronous dialogue and information sharing was effective in meeting the needs of the participants. Within a short time, 33 participants joined the platform and contributed content. Within the online community, we set up and pre-structured separate workspaces for each of the teams in Phase 2. We provided all teams with their own Zoom room, a forum for threaded discussions, a collaborative whiteboard, a digital bulletin board, and an upload area for their own resources. In a general section of the community LMS, a networking forum as well as a tech support forum were available to the participants. However, we signaled to the participants that these spaces were an offering in the sense of a community and that the teams could, if they chose, fall back on other tools for communication and collaboration.

Program Evaluation

Through our year-long project, we gathered data from surveys, interviews, and observations to create new knowledge about this unique form of professional development program. We wanted to address these questions:

- What did participants learn? How did they perceive the value of the program?
- What happens when partners work collaboratively to generate questions about a media artifact about disinformation, fake news, or propaganda?
- What motivates someone to participate in a global, intercultural PD in times of a pandemic?

What did participants learn? In our January 2022 needs assessment survey, we asked participants to indicate which issues they might need support with. Participants could answer “yes” or “no” and we used this data to determine the priorities for shaping the Power of Two program. In May 2022, we asked participants, “Did you gain knowledge on the following topics?” Table 4 shows the results, which provide strong evidence that participants learned about critical analysis of misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda (80.6%), building citizenship skills/empowering youth (77.8%), theoretical frameworks in media literacy (75%), integrating media literacy into instruction (75%), and assessment and evaluation of media literacy skills (72.2%). A little more than half of participants say they learned to develop digital teaching materials (58.3%). We were particularly gratified to observe that although in January, only 23.4% of participants believed they needed support for social interactions and online communication, 94.4% of them indicated that they gained knowledge on this topic by the time the program concluded. From this evidence, we can infer that program participants experienced meaningful growth in appreciating the power of online social interactions as a form of professional learning.

Table 4
What Participants Learned

	Needs Assessment N=34		Post-Test N=36					
	YES		YES		<i>Undecided</i>		NO	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Integrating media literacy in my curriculum/developing lesson plans	22	64.7	27	75.0	2	5.6	7	19.4
Assessment and evaluation of media literacy skills	21	61.8	26	72.2	5	13.9	5	13.9
Critical analysis of misinformation, disinformation, and fake news	20	58.8	29	80.6	7	19.4	0	0
Developing digital teaching materials	18	52.9	21	58.3	9	25.0	6	16.7
Theoretical frameworks in media literacy	16	47.1	27	75.0	5	13.9	4	11.1
Building citizenship skills/empowering youth	16	47.1	28	77.8	4	11.1	4	11.1
Social interactions and online communication	8	23.5	34	94.4	1	2.8	1	2.8

Needs Assessment Which issues might you need support with?

Post-test: Did you gain knowledge on the following topics?

How did participants perceive the value of the program? To examine perceptions of the value of the program, we used the Net Promoter score (NPS), a standardized measure of program satisfaction that has been used in both business and education.²² The measure is widely used to measure the customers’ willingness to recommend a product, program, or service to their friends or colleagues. If participants are willing to recommend a program to a colleague, they must be satisfied with the experience. As Figure 6 shows, three groups are identified by their response to the question: promoters, passives, and detractors. NPS is calculated by subtracting the percentage of participants who demote the program from those who are willing to promote or recommend it. Those who rate the program a 7 or 8 are ignored. Figure 6 shows a Net Promoter Score of 76.6, which is a very strong indication that most participants perceived the program to be highly valuable.

“How likely are you to recommend MEDIALOGUES or a similar professional learning experience to your colleagues? N = 36

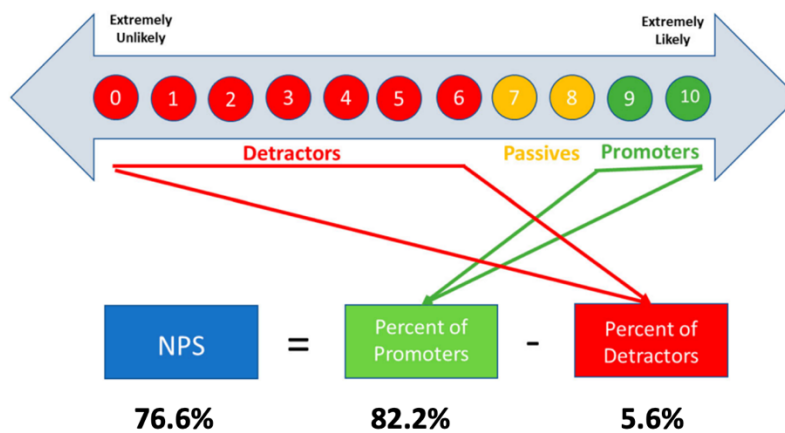


Figure 6. Net Promoter Score (NPS), a global measure of customer satisfaction used in program evaluation, shows high levels of loyalty with a larger number of promoters and few detractors.

What happens when partners work collaboratively to generate questions about a media artifact about disinformation, fake news, or propaganda? The best evidence we have on what happens when partners work collaboratively to generate questions about propaganda and disinformation comes from the culminating event on April 26, 2022, where participants were invited to share the results of their collaboration. Nine teams presented their work and we transcribed their short presentations and reviewed the slides they created to present their work. In reviewing these presentations as shown on Table 5, we

²² Kara, A., Mintu-Wimsatt, A., & Spillan, J. E. (2021). An application of the net promoter score in higher education. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 1-24.

find strong evidence of creating and critical thinking that builds upon concepts and instructional practices that were modelled and demonstrated during the Medialogues on Propaganda program.

Table 5

The Power of Two Final Projects

<p>1. April Leach and Randall Fujimoto</p>	<p>Game-Based Media Literacy Learning</p> <p>April Leach, Palm Beach County Public Schools (USA) and Randall Fujimoto, Game Train Learning (USA) first met as regular participants in the fall Medialogues program. In <i>The Power of Two</i>, they worked to develop a game-based activity utilizing Minecraft to build media literacy, social emotional learning, and English proficiency skills for English Language Learners. For instance, they described one way that students might begin their inquiry with a story about contaminated drinking water and they would then use multiple sources — including the Ad Fontes Media Bias Chart explored earlier in our Medialogues webinars — to have students investigate multiple sources related to their topic. Then, in Minecraft, they would invite students to imagine their project in action; with this topic, for instance, students could create a new drinking fountain with a filtering system. Leach and Fujimoto suggested that students might even create final screencast videos, describing their inquiry with media literacy practices and creating a “tour” in Minecraft.</p> <p>The power of two came to fruition for this pair; from this initial collaboration, they developed a grant proposal, “Cyber Café: Student-directed Minecraft Projects advancing ELL Media Literacy, Language, and SEL Learning,” to be submitted to a funder. We were notified on May 28th that their project was approved for \$8,000 in funding from the SEL in Action Award, funded by NoVo Foundation, Education First, and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors (RPA).</p>
<p>2. Bob Van Oosterhout, Randall Fujimoto, Jannis Hahn & Iglia Ivanov</p>	<p>Addressing Fear-Based Thinking with Media Literacy</p> <p>The second collaboration consisted of Bob Van Oosterhout (USA), Randall Fujimoto (USA), Jannis Hahn (Germany), and Iglia Ivanov (Bulgaria). For this four-person team, the focus also included gamified elements as they created a classroom game for secondary students entitled, “Fear-Based Thinking, SEL, and Media Literacy.” With the primary goal that students will understand how fear and fear-based thinking affect our perceptions, the team focused on the intersections of media literacy and social-emotional learning, helping students move beyond a scarcity model in their thinking. Providing a heuristic of the “ABCs” (accept, balance, and clarify), the group described how their game would invite students into a collaborative, not competitive, game</p>

	<p>where they would examine contemporary propaganda in Europe, especially related to the conflict in Ukraine, and help students discern the persuasive techniques and misinformation being used. Their goal, ultimately, is to help students understand how to promote democracy that bring insights on the nature of propaganda to overcome fear while also giving students the social-emotional tools to recognize the effects of fear on their own mental health and well-being.</p>
<p>3. Philipp Schleicher & Ashkumar Gopalani</p>	<p>Influencers In Our Lives</p> <p>In their work together, Philipp Schleicher, (Germany) a middle level-educator, and Ashkumar Gopalani (India) a media literacy consultant, designed and implemented a lesson for ninth grade students in which they would examine multiple media artifacts to discern the effects of “influencers” and to uncover the ways in which influencer marketing has taken hold in social media. Sharing examples from Instagram created by contemporary influencers — as well as historical smoking advertisements and public service announcements about the effects of nicotine — Schleicher and Gopalani invite their students to consider the ways in which propaganda can be used in positive and negative ways. Returning to the core questions of “Is the post selling something?”, “What aspects of the post do you find influential?”, and “Go through the text and the image, what atmosphere does it set?” as their protocol, students would look for patterns in the propaganda, both modern and from the past. As a culminating activity, students plan to analyze and create their own gallery of examples with modern examples of misinformation from health and wellness influencers, describing how each uses propaganda techniques. They plan to continue their collaboration in the future offering more opportunities for students from Germany and India to communicate with one another.</p>
<p>4. Zan Walker-Goncalves & Maha Bali</p>	<p>International Bridge Building</p> <p>Zan Walker-Goncalves, a writing professor at Franklin Pierce University in Rindge, New Hampshire (USA) and Maha Bali, an instructional designer and instructor at American University in Cairo (Egypt) worked to help students used both synchronous and asynchronous technologies to connect, engage in dialogue, and build empathy and humility. Beginning by having students write the story of “My Name” that they could then share during a real time conversation in Zoom, Walker-Goncalves and Bali first connected students in mid-February for a 75-minute workshop, beginning just after 7:00 PM in Egypt and 12:00 PM in America. In that workshop, they shared their name stories and engaged in some brief media literacy analysis activities. From that initial meeting, Walker-Goncalves and Bali then scaffolded students through a semester-long project that also included</p>

	<p>asynchronous discussion of three readings about empathy and the plight of refugees from Syria using the Hypothes.is web annotation tool. At the middle of the semester, students were invited to share a 2-minute video reflection on the process of collaboration using Flipgrid. A second Zoom session near the end of the semester invited students to “Describe a time you felt your culture or identity was not seen or heard or respected or was misappropriated,” and to share those stories with one another in breakout rooms. Ultimately, Walker-Goncalves and Bali were encouraged by students’ willingness to engage in the work and express what they describe as “cultural humility,” all in an effort to continue dialogue and build empathy.</p>
<p>5. Renee Hobbs & Pam Steager</p>	<p>Media Literacy for the Austin Police Academy Renee Hobbs (USA) and Pam Steager (USA) used the Power of Two process to support the needs of instructors who teach in the Austin Police Academy in Texas. They had been asked to help trainers make better use of videos for learning, and they brought a media literacy lens to their efforts; in the workshop, they invited officers to critically examine videos used in police training, including how they may reinforce race and gender stereotypes and promote excessive use of force. From their work, they recognized the need that officers must move beyond an institutionalized norm of “us-vs-them” thinking, noting that police instructors need support to appreciate multi-perspectival thinking.</p>
<p>6. Cathy Leogrande, Insa Martin & Franziska Pukowski</p>	<p>Deconstructing Stereotypes As a three-person team, Cathy Leogrande (USA), Insa Martin (Germany) & Franziska Pukowski (Germany) worked together to help their 13- and 14-year-old students to recognize, understand, actively engage with, and deconstruct stereotypes of ableism. Developing a sequence of lessons that would help students critically evaluate media stereotypes in the form of superhero comics, this trio invited students to examine the ways that stereotypes pervade real-life literature, often creating misrepresentation of minorities and those who have intersectional identities. They were able to develop lesson plans and related instructional materials and were also able to engage in teaching at Deutschhaus Gymnasium, Wuerzburg. With key questions that include “What’s the use of using stereotypes?” and “How are these stereotypes helpful and/or harmful?”, the teachers then guide students through steps of analyzing these stereotypes and the representations of super heroes that students themselves have found from popular culture. From there, students would create their own drawings of superheroes in a four-panel comic strip, bringing their ideas about appropriate representation to life. Given their work with German students, these</p>

	examples are quite pertinent.
7. Huan Gao & Kristina Förster	<p>Culturally Sensitive Information Literacy in a Social Virtual Reality Context</p> <p>Through their partnership, Huan Gao (China) and Kristina Förster (Germany) worked to examine approaches to information literacy education in intercultural settings. They examined the ways in which media literacy standards represent a socio-cultural, critical approach to media literacy. If established standards in information literacy education imply universal validity, then there is a risk that the information literacy strategies of international students and teachers will be perceived as deficient. A culturally sensitive approach to information literacy would be based on dialogue to pluralize perspectives and strategies. A culturally sensitive approach to information literacy would be based on dialogue to pluralize perspectives and strategies. Through their conversations, they linked this approach to a pedagogical concept using a social VR environment. Especially in transnational contexts, this medium offers special potentials, as social presence can be experienced, which in turn can have an empathy-promoting effect and facilitate dialogical processes. Using that environment, they were able to collaborate on designing a pilot project. Though it is still in a beginning phase, they are likely to continue.</p>
8. Melanie Hartman and Fred Haas	<p>Spotting Propaganda</p> <p>As an early childhood educator and a high school teacher, Melanie Hartman (Germany) and Fred Haas, a high school teacher from Hopkinton, Massachusetts (USA) brought their shared interest in exploring international news to help create “kid-friendly” (and, for that matter, “teen-friendly”) resources to help their students, younger and older, to gain context and perspective on major headlines. In sorting through the many news sources, they tried to identify ones that leaned more into propaganda-driven techniques as compared to reputable media outlets, and their curated list provides students with a brief overview of media outlet’s nation of origin, and some comments about ownership (public vs private), primary mode (periodical vs broadcast), and screenshots to show their students what to expect.</p>
9. Johnny Allred and Lauren McClanahan, Colleen Kenyon	<p>Critiquing the Influencers</p> <p>Working with pre-service English teachers at two American universities, Johnny Allred from Brigham Young University (USA) and Lauren McClanahan (Seattle, USA) are working to integrate media literacies into their existing teaching methods course curricula. Their project invited pre-service teachers to examine their own social media</p>

	<p>feeds, looking for examples where they would find and analyze an example of a YouTuber, Instagrammer, TikTokker, vlogger or blogger who is popular in the health/diet/exercise/nutrition world. From there, they would use the five key questions of media literacy to form a critique of these influencers’ social media posts, and then create a 3 – 5-minute screencast in which they deconstruct those posts. Finally, they would embed that screencast in a video annotation tool such as Video Ant to offer a few written reflections on the choices that they made throughout their project.</p>
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What motivates someone to participate in a global, intercultural PD in times of a pandemic? Of course, intrinsic motivation is both contextual and situational – and because this program was an online professional development program – we know little about the contexts where participants experienced learning. From the attendance data, we observe that no two participants had the same learning experience. Participants chose to attend whichever of the various Medialogues programs that piqued their interest. It is highly likely that work and home factors also affected their level of availability.

We used the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI) to better understand the subjective experience of participants’ motivations. The IMI is a multidimensional scale²³ developed in support of self-determination theory, which posits that motivation is moderated by three innate needs: autonomy, belonging, and competence.²⁴ The instrument assesses participants’ interest/enjoyment, perceived competence, effort, value/usefulness, felt pressure and tension, perceived choice, and the experience of relatedness.

Table 6
Intrinsic Motivation Inventory for the Medialogues on Propaganda Program

Dimensions	N	MEAN	SD	Min.	Max.
Interest/Enjoyment	36	6.32	0.74	4.00	7.00
Perceived Competence	36	4.98	1.01	2.67	7.00
Effort/Importance	36	4.88	1.67	1.00	7.00
Pressure/Tension	36	5.43	1.30	1.33	7.00
Perceived Choice	36	6.24	1.30	3.00	7.00
Value/Usefulness	36	6.39	0.77	4.00	7.00
Relatedness	36	5.73	1.05	2.67	7.00

²³ Markland, D., & Hardy, L. (1997). On the factorial and construct validity of the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory: Conceptual and operational concerns. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 68(1), 20-32.

²⁴ Ryan, R. M., Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-78.

When applying the intrinsic motivation inventory to professional development for media literacy education, we posit that people will be motivated to learn when they have autonomy and choice, strong connections with peers and colleagues, and when they perceive themselves as competent in the tasks required for participation. Table 6 shows that participants were motivated primarily by the perceived value and usefulness of the program (6.39), followed by interest and enjoyment (6.32) and perceived choice (6.24). Of moderate value were relatedness (5.73) and pressure/tension (5.43). The lowest values were for perceived competence (4.98), and effort/importance (4.88). Thus, we conclude that participants were motivated to engage in the professional learning program primarily because of the autonomy it cultivated and rewarded.

Further Insights from the Project

The opportunity to collaborate on the Medialogues project resulted in a significant amount of learning for all members of the project team. Because we were able to involve two German PhD students specializing in media and technology education, the program had value in supporting the leadership development competencies of the next generation of teacher educators in Germany. We will take what we learned into the future as we continue to explore and experiment with new forms of online professional learning for educators in Germany and around the world.

We recognize that the Medialogues program reached educators who already self-identify as independent, lifelong learners. Participants were people who appreciated intercultural dialogue, were comfortable speaking in English, and who valued the active participation component of the program. We acknowledge that commitment to a sustained project like Medialogues was difficult for many participants. We were unable to measure the value of each webinar as it was experienced by participants, so we cannot assess how casual participants (the many who only attended one event) perceived there to be value to the experience. In the future, we will continue to balance events that can be experienced as stand alone, one-time sessions (like the Phase 1 webinars) with opportunities for deeper collaboration (like Phase 2 Power of Two). We may want to experiment with an alternating pattern, where a webinar delivered in the first week of the month could be followed by a “Power of Two” gathering. An approach like this might also encourage those who missed the live webinars to view them before meeting with their partners. Still, a good sense of community developed among a small group and people reached out to continue relationships. As we expected, the size of the Spring cohort was smaller, but evidence is strong that this program format inspired meaningful relationships and productive partnerships.

We relied on participants’ intrinsic motivation to attend the program, but we wish we could also have offered extrinsic rewards to motivate participation, especially for German educators. Budget limitations did not permit this. A larger budget of \$50,000 or \$75,000 would have enabled us to engage teachers more successfully by incentivizing them with a stipend (or paying for graduate credits for a sustained program). We understand that these kinds of stipends and project financials can create some challenges for the leadership team, especially for international payments for those working in public institutions. Any given teacher may not be entirely motivated by earning a stipend, but we believe that a project of this sort could have benefitted from an application and acceptance process. When educators have a personal investment in the work, they are more likely to commit to regular meetings and producing a deliverable at the end.

We learned that different regulations about data privacy affect collaboration between German and American educators and researchers. General Data Protection Regulation GDPR of the European Union and its application and practice in Germany by Federal, regional, and institutional data protection officers may lead to the decision to not recommend or even ban the use of public cloud services in German educational institutions, especially when processing of personal data is taking place. Although our German partners made this quite clear to us, it was difficult for American team members to adapt their online learning practices, since the use of Google Docs, Forms, and other tools are ubiquitous in American educational contexts in both K-12 and higher education. We continued to use them in planning and implementing the Medialogues program, and sometimes we modeled the use of these tools in the online programs.

However, we worked closely with our WUE team members to use an online survey tool compatible with European GDPR regulations for collecting personal data like names or emails from participants, and we also created a space for asynchronous participation on the WUE Open Campus platform, which is hosted by the University of Wuerzburg and familiar to some German educators. It is possible that, because of the differing stances on data privacy, intercultural programs that focus on digital and media literacy pedagogies may not seem relevant to German educators if software is used that is not compliant to local data protection regulations.

Conclusion

Propaganda, disinformation, and the changing epistemologies of the information environment continue to be a meaningful problem with direct relevance to people around the world, and this project focused its efforts on working with an underserved audience: teachers and teacher educators. We are grateful to the Public Affairs Section of the Berlin Embassy for the opportunity to collaborate and learn from this experience. It was a leadership development program for our whole team. We ourselves are learning along with participants about online professional development in times of crisis, in adapting to the new realities of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. The information we learned from this program helped us better understand the value of good design in the practice of online professional development. The opportunity to address timely issues, including propaganda in wartime, increased the perceived relevance of the program for all.

About the Project Team

The [Media Education Lab](#) at the University of Rhode Island (USA) advances the quality of digital and media literacy education through scholarship and community service. With its vibrant online learning community, it is the largest provider of professional development in media literacy in the United States, offering a year-round professional development events, teaching resources, and research publications.

The [Media Education and Educational Technology Lab](#) (Germany) is the University of Wuerzburg's school and media pedagogical lab for research and teaching. It focuses on aspects of teaching and learning with and about digital media in school as well as in teacher education from a pedagogical, technical, interdisciplinary, and international comparative perspective.

Media Literacy Now (USA) is a non-profit organization devoted to advancing media literacy in the United States. This organization serves as the fiscal agent for this project.

The **U.S. Embassy Berlin, Public Affairs Section (PAS)** supports this project which is designed to showcase cutting-edge approaches to foster increased media literacy with participating German audiences. using an interdisciplinary and international comparative perspective.