THE URGENCY OF MEDIA EDUCATION IN THE AGE OF DISINFORMATION: A CASE STUDY IN THE PERIPHERY OF SÃO PAULO
A URGÊNCIA DA EDUCAÇÃO MIDIÁTICA NA ERA DA DESINFORMAÇÃO: UM ESTUDO DE CASO NA PERIFERIA PAULISTANA
LA URGENCIA DE LA EDUCACIÓN MEDIÁTICA EN LA ERA DE LA DESINFORMACIÓN: UN ESTUDIO DE CASO EN LA PERIFERIA DE SÃO PAULO

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	ABSTRACT
Keywords: media education, professional qualification, disinformation, CMCT, Itaim Paulista	This study investigates the urgency of integrating media education in the professional training of young people and adults in peripheral contexts, using the Municipal Center for Training and Training (CMCT) of Itaim Paulista as a case study, where it sought not only to identify the gaps in knowledge and skills in relation to media and information, but also to propose strategies for the development of a qualification course in media education adapted to local needs. The research employs a qualitative methodology, including focus groups with 21 participants, participant observation and document analysis. The results reveal gaps in media literacy, with excessive reliance on the authority of the source to assess the credibility of information. However, there is a high interest (91% of participants) in media education, where in the discussion we emphasize the urgency of media education. The study concludes by proposing the implementation of a qualification course in media education adapted to local needs, aiming to promote active digital citizenship and combat disinformation. It is recommended the implementation of a professional qualification course in media education, which not only teaches media production practices, but also fact-checking techniques and the construction of a better balanced media diet, as well as the training of educators and institutional partnerships to face the challenges identified and capitalize on the interest shown by the participants.
	RESUMO
Palavras-chave: educação midiática, qualificação profissional, desinformação, CMCT, Itaim Paulista	Este estudo investiga a urgência da integração da educação midiática na capacitação profissional de jovens e adultos em contextos periféricos, utilizando o Centro Municipal de Capacitação e Treinamento (CMCT) do Itaim Paulista como estudo de caso, onde buscou não apenas identificar as lacunas de conhecimento e habilidades em relação à mídia e informação, mas também propor estratégias para o desenvolvimento de um curso de qualificação em educação midiática adaptado às necessidades locais. A pesquisa

emprega uma metodologia qualitativa, incluindo grupos focais com 21 participantes, observação participante e análise documental. Os resultados revelam lacunas na alfabetização midiática, com dependência excessiva da autoridade da fonte para avaliar a credibilidade das informações. Contudo, há um alto interesse (91% dos participantes) em educação midiática, onde na discussão enfatizamos a urgência da educação midiática. O estudo conclui propondo a implementação de um curso de qualificação em educação midiática adaptado às necessidades locais, visando promover cidadania digital ativa e combater a desinformação. Recomenda-se a implantação de um curso de qualificação profissional em educação midiática, que não apenas ensine práticas de produção de mídia, mas também técnicas de fact-checking e a construção de uma dieta midiática melhor balanceada, bem como a formação de educadores e parcerias institucionais para enfrentar os desafios identificados e capitalizar o interesse demonstrado pelos participantes.

RESUMEN

Este estudio investiga la urgencia de integrar la educación mediática en la formación profesional de jóvenes y adultos en contextos periféricos, utilizando como caso de estudio el Centro Municipal de Capacitación y Capacitación (CMCT) de Itaim Paulista, donde se buscó no solo identificar las brechas de conocimientos y habilidades en relación con los medios y la información, sino también proponer estrategias para el desarrollo de un curso de calificación en educación mediática adaptado a las necesidades locales. La investigación emplea una metodología cualitativa, que incluye grupos focales con 21 participantes, observación participante y análisis de documentos. Los resultados revelan brechas en la alfabetización mediática, con una dependencia excesiva de la autoridad de la fuente para evaluar la credibilidad de la información. Sin embargo, existe un alto interés (91% de los participantes) en la educación mediática, donde en la discusión se enfatiza la urgencia de la educación mediática. El estudio concluye proponiendo la implementación de un curso de cualificación en educación mediática adaptado a las necesidades locales, con el objetivo de promover la ciudadanía digital activa y combatir la desinformación. Se recomienda la implementación de un curso de cualificación profesional en educación mediática, que no solo enseñe prácticas de producción mediática, sino también técnicas de fact-checking y la construcción de una dieta mediática más equilibrada, así como la formación de educadores y alianzas institucionales para enfrentar los desafíos identificados y capitalizar el interés mostrado por los participantes.

Introduction

In today's digital age, the proliferation of disinformation poses challenges for society as a whole, threatening the foundations of democracy and social cohesion. This phenomenon is particularly worrying in contexts of socio-economic vulnerability, where access to quality education and reliable information resources can be limited. The district of Itaim Paulista, located on the outskirts of the eastern zone of the city of São Paulo, exemplifies an area where the need for media education is becoming increasingly urgent.

David Buckingham, one of the leading theorists in the field, states that "media education should not be seen merely as a protection against the negative effects of the media, but as an opportunity to empower individuals to actively participate in media culture" (Buckingham, 2003). He stresses the need to integrate media education into the school curriculum in order to develop critical analysis, creation and participation skills.

Ismar de Oliveira Soares, a pioneer of educommunication in Brazil, complements this view by emphasizing the importance of strategies that integrate communication and education. According to Soares, educommunication "promotes a learning environment where students become producers of content, not just passive consumers", reinforcing media education as a tool for social empowerment (Soares, 2014).

UNESCO, for its part, has promoted media and information literacy (MIL) as an essential human right in the 21st century. The organization defines MIL as "a set of skills needed to access, analyze, evaluate and create content in different contexts and platforms" (UNESCO, 2013). UNESCO advocates the emergence of MIL for the development of informed and democratic societies, empowering citizens to make informed decisions and participate fully in public life.

The potential of media education lies in its ability to transform individuals' relationship with the media and information. By developing critical skills, individuals become better able to identify disinformation and understand complex media contexts. In addition, media education promotes digital inclusion, ensuring that everyone, regardless of their socio-economic background, has the opportunity to engage with digital technologies in a meaningful way.

Media education, defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create content in various forms of media (Buckingham, 2019), becomes essential in this context to combat disinformation and promote active digital citizenship, considering that school, as one of the main spaces for literacy, cannot allow its students to pass through it without reflecting on media texts Nicacio (2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the urgency of this integration, exposing weaknesses in information and communication systems, and highlighting the vulnerability of marginalized populations to misinformation, to which Santana (2021) emphasizes the need for media literacy especially for smartphone users, who have become the main source of information for many individuals.

Media education has gained increasing relevance in the contemporary educational scenario, especially in the face of the challenges posed by the age of disinformation. Buckingham (2019) argues that media education goes beyond simply protecting against the negative effects of the media, where he is incisive about the importance of developing a critical understanding and active participation in digital culture where media education has the potential to strengthen democracy. As highlighted by the Brazilian Strategy for Media Education (EBEM), the activities, actions, proposals and projects that involve media education should have the objective of "sustaining democracy, since media-educated people understand the importance of the plurality of voices in circulation and understand

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their responsibility when interacting with information, whether as consumers or producers." (Social Communication Secretariat, 2023, p. 10).

In the context of youth and adult education (EJA), the integration of media education presents unique challenges and opportunities. Ribeiro, Baptista and Ribeiro (2021) argue that pedagogical guidance plays an important role in promoting the improvement of human conditions and life in society, guiding practices in a committed, personal and social way. This perspective is particularly relevant for the EJA, where students bring diverse life experiences and face specific challenges in accessing and interpreting information. The absence of professionals specialized in pedagogical guidance, as observed at the Itaim Paulista Municipal Training Center (CMCT), can negatively impact both pedagogical practices and teacher training (Libâneo, 2021), and this gap is especially worrying when it comes to implementing media education programs, which require a specialized and up-to-date pedagogical approach.

Manuel Castells (2003) highlights the challenges of the network society, emphasizing how information and communication technologies have fundamentally transformed social and economic structures. In this context, media education has become not just an educational tool, but a social necessity for full participation in contemporary society. The integration of media education in the professional training of young people and adults in peripheral contexts presents challenges that highlight the urgency of an education for and with the media (Soares, 2014) as a response to the challenges of the age of disinformation, especially in contexts of socio-economic vulnerability.

In the literature we researched, we identified a worrying gap in media literacy among EJA students, who are particularly vulnerable to misinformation and manipulation, a phenomenon aggravated by what Pariser (2011) calls the "filter bubble", where algorithms on digital platforms create personalized information environments, potentially limiting exposure to diverse perspectives and reinforcing pre-existing beliefs.

The proliferation of fake news and the so-called "infodemic", a concept first explored by the WHO and then by authors such as Silva (2022) and Ruschel and Boufleuer (2023), represent significant challenges for democracy and social cohesion. In this context, media education is not just limited to identifying false information, but encompasses a broader understanding of the mechanisms of information production and dissemination, including the role of algorithms and power structures in the media.

Sene (2021) emphasizes the need to adapt media education approaches to the Brazilian reality, taking into account the country's cultural, social and technological specificities. This includes addressing issues such as unequal access to technology and the diversity of cultural backgrounds present in the EJA. Our bibliographical research also revealed the importance of developing critical information evaluation skills, where media education in the EJA is not just about providing tools to navigate the digital information environment, but about empowering individuals to actively participate in building a more informed and democratic society. This study highlights the urgency of implementing comprehensive media education programs, tailored to the specific needs of EJA students, as a crucial step towards strengthening citizenship and democratic resilience in contemporary Brazil.

Method

This qualitative study focuses on a case study at the Professor Lenine Soares de Jesus Municipal Training Center (CMCT), located in the district of Itaim Paulista, on the outskirts of the eastern part of the city of São Paulo. The choice of this methodology is in

line with the perspective of Lösch, *et al.* (2023), who argue that qualitative research in education, especially in specific contexts, can provide experiences, insights and even the formulation of more assertive educational policies and practices.

Place of Study

The Centro Municipal de Capacitação e Treinamento (CMCT) Itaim Paulista plays a crucial role in the community by offering professional development opportunities in a region marked by socio-economic challenges. Located on the east side of São Paulo, CMCT serves a diverse population looking to improve their skills and increase their chances of entering the job market.

In addition to the courses on offer, CMCT Itaim Paulista stands out for its inclusive approach, allowing people of different ages and backgrounds to access education and training. This openness contributes to social integration and the empowerment of individuals, promoting equal opportunities. The CMCT's infrastructure is modest but functional, with 8 classrooms equipped to meet the needs of practical courses, as well as an auditorium and free space inside. However, the lack of a specialized pedagogical advisor represents a significant challenge. This professional could help adapt curricula to current market demands and implement more effective teaching methodologies that meet students' specific needs.

Despite these limitations, CMCT Itaim Paulista maintains a welcoming and supportive environment where students are encouraged to pursue their educational and professional goals. The dedication of the administrative team and school agents is evident in the continuous effort to improve the quality of teaching and expand the range of courses on offer, seeking partnerships with local companies and non-governmental organizations to further enrich student learning.

It offers a total of seven free courses, open to the community from the age of 14 and with no age limit: Administrative Assistant, Logistics Assistant, Confectionery, Cutting and Sewing, Home and Building Electrics, IT and Baking. The school has a lean administrative structure, made up of a school manager, a secretary and five school agents.

Students arrive at the CMCT following a voluntary registration process and a subsequent lottery for places. There are approximately 20 places per course, in a total of 25 classes. Those interested are from the neighborhood of Itaim Paulista and nearby districts, as well as neighboring cities such as Ferraz de Vasconcelos, Itaquaquecetuba, Guarulhos and Poá.

Participants

The participants in this study reflect the diversity and cultural richness of the local community. With ages ranging from 16 to 55, they bring a wide range of life experiences that enrich the learning environment. Many students seek professional training as a way of re-entering the job market or changing careers, while others want to improve their skills in order to advance in their current occupations.

Participants' previous educational experience varies considerably. Some have only completed elementary school, while others have completed high school and even technical courses. This variety of academic backgrounds contributes to a dynamic learning environment where students can share different perspectives and knowledge.

In terms of familiarity with digital technologies, there is also significant diversity. Some participants demonstrate proficiency in the use of digital tools, often using smartphones and computers for personal and professional purposes. Others, however, are just beginning to explore the digital world, which highlights the importance of the computer courses offered by the CMCT.

The focus groups held with the students were strategically divided to capture the experiences and opinions of students from different shifts. The morning and afternoon focus group included participants who generally have daytime availability, often balancing their studies with family responsibilities or other commitments. The afternoon and evening groups included students who mostly work during the day and are looking for professional training as an opportunity to grow after work.

The focus group involved 21 young people and adults enrolled in professional training courses at CMCT Itaim Paulista, groups that represented a diverse sample in terms of age, previous educational experience, familiarity with digital technologies and the shift they study. The school has three shifts (morning, afternoon and evening). A focus group with 11 students took place between morning and afternoon and another with 10 participants between afternoon and evening. The students were invited to take part in the study through a classroom invitation and an activity called "CMCT Experiences", where the students were able to get to know and experience a little of what each course offers.

At these times, we presented the objectives of the research and explained the data collection method, always making clear the relationship between research ethics and authorization from the Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF), as well as the Free and Informed Assent Form for students under the age of 18.

Data Collection

Data was collected using three main methods:

- Analysis of internal documents: Documents related to the curriculum, educational policies and audiovisual material produced by this school unit and its students were examined, as well as media content produced by the Municipal Department of Education of the city of São Paulo (SME SP).
- Participant observation: The researcher took part in classes and activities at the CMCT, observing the students' interactions with the media and technologies available.
- Focus groups: Two focus groups were conducted with the participants, using a questionnaire with a semi-structured script as a research tool to explore their perceptions of media and information, as well as their specific needs in relation to media education.

Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed using a qualitative content analysis approach. The participants' answers were categorized and coded using Laurence Bardin's content analysis method, with the help of *Atlas.Ti®* software to identify recurring themes and patterns. This technique allowed us to understand the participants' perceptions, skills and needs in relation to media education.

Data analysis in the context of this study was based on the content analysis technique proposed by Bardin (2011), which involves a coding process that transforms raw data into meaningful units of information. This process began with pre-analysis, a preparatory phase in which the data was organized and hypotheses formulated. During this stage, according to the author, the researcher becomes familiar with the material collected, defining the documents to be analyzed and formulating the objectives of the analysis (Bardin, 2011).

We then explored the material, which is the most extensive and laborious stage. At this stage, the data is systematically coded, i.e. it is broken down into units of meaning which are then classified into categories. Bardin (2011) emphasizes that these categories

must be mutually exclusive and exhaustive, ensuring that all relevant information is captured and classified appropriately.

The third phase is the processing of the results, inference and interpretation. Here, the categorized data is analyzed to identify significant patterns and relationships. Bardin (2011) suggests that this stage is one of the most important for validating initial hypotheses and building new theoretical interpretations. This content analysis thus allows the researcher to extrapolate the data beyond what is immediately observable, perceptible and experienced in relation to the participants' behaviors.

In the context of the study carried out at CMCT Itaim Paulista, content analysis was applied to the data collected in the focus groups and participant observations. The emerging categories included themes such as the importance of media education, the barriers faced by students and their expectations of the courses on offer. Through content analysis, it was possible to identify that many participants valued media education as a means of improving their employment opportunities and social participation and realized through the exchanges of experiences in the focus group the importance of integrating this education into their curricula and professional training.

Ethical Considerations

All participants were informed about the objectives of the study and voluntarily agreed to take part. The information provided was guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines for research in education, submitted to Plataforma Brasil and approved by the research ethics committee under CAEE number 80140024.6.0000.0081 and opinion number 6.866.011.

Study Limitations

It is important to recognize that, as a single case study, the results may not be generalizable to all youth and adult education contexts. However, qualitative research in education allows the researcher to analyze educational issues in greater depth, transcending numbers to understand the meaning and essence of educational experiences.

Results

The results of the survey revealed interesting data on the relationship between students and media education and the digital information environment. Firstly, we noted the high level of interest in media education, with 91% of participants expressing a desire to attend a course in this area. This dialogues directly with what Baiense and Borges (2019) argue about media education as a fundamental right for citizen participation. This interest reflects a growing awareness of the importance of these skills among this audience, which we realize is not only eager to consume, but also to produce in the digital age.

The 5 categories of analysis that emerged from the research are directly related to what we also found in dissertations and theses in the field of media education carried out in Brazil over the last 5 years and give us an insight into the students' practices and perceptions. In the first of these, "use of media devices and platforms", there was a diversity of sources, including social networks, search engines and traditional media. In the second, "information credibility criteria", the participants showed strong confidence in the authority of the source and in corroboration by multiple sources. In the third, "verification practices", curiously, social networks were cited as verification tools, which

raises questions about the understanding of the role of these platforms in spreading disinformation. In the fourth, "democracy and citizen participation", the research revealed a connection between media education and democratic participation, in line with UNESCO's (2016) discussions on the importance of media literacy for citizenship. And in the fifth, "demands for media education", the interest in courses related to media creation (6.9% of registrations) indicates a demand for practical skills in this area.

A particularly interesting finding was the use of *YouTube* to verify historical facts, which highlights the use of social media platforms in the formation of historical and factual knowledge. This behavior suggests that social media platforms are not just sources of entertainment, but also play a role in educating users, a change in the way people access and validate information.

Traditionally, historical facts were verified through academic sources or textbooks. However, the accessibility and variety of content available on YouTube offers users a practical and visual alternative for exploring multiple perspectives on these events. This phenomenon also raises questions about the curation and quality of the information available on these platforms, and although YouTube offers a wide range of content, the accuracy and reliability of these materials can vary significantly. This highlights the importance of developing critical thinking skills in users, so that they can assess the credibility of videos and distinguish between factual and misleading information. In addition, the use of YouTube for educational and fact-checking purposes can influence the way historical knowledge is constructed and disseminated. Content creators (known as 'youtubers') have the power to shape historical narratives, often presenting information in a way that is accessible and engaging, but which may lack academic rigor. Therefore, this finding underlines the need to integrate media education into school curricula, enabling students to use these platforms beyond mere consumption with full credit. This includes teaching how to verify the authenticity of sources, understand the historical context and recognize potential biases in the content consumed.

Participant observation revealed practical behaviors in media use that were not always verbalized in interviews, emphasizing the importance of research methods that go beyond self-reporting. During the observation sessions, it was noted that many participants demonstrated intuitive skills in the use of digital platforms that were not mentioned during the focus groups. For example, several students navigated deftly between different social media applications, quickly switching between entertainment and information content, a practice that was not articulated verbally when asked about their media consumption habits. In addition, participant observation revealed discrepancies between the stated perceptions and the actual behaviors of the participants in relation to verifying information. While in the focus groups many claimed to check multiple sources before sharing content, in practice there was a tendency to share information quickly, often based solely on trust in the original source or emotional reaction to the content. The disparity between observed and reported behavior also resonates with the findings of Silva (2022) in his study on media use by adolescents, where digital practices often differed from the narratives presented by the participants.

Finally, we found that the results point to an urgent need for media education programs that address not only the critical consumption of information, but also the ethical and responsible production of content.

Perceptions of Media and Information

Participants showed a general awareness of the importance of the media in their daily lives, but also expressed substantial concerns about the risks associated with a lack of understanding of the media. One participant, identified as "C G1", expressed: "I think

we are running extreme risks, because the lack of knowledge is atrocious ignorance. Knowing, understanding and knowing how the media and the media work is fundamental for the preservation of collectivity, democracy and security in media-mediated environments", a perception that reflects the understanding of the relationship between media education and democratic participation, in line with Buckingham's (2019) view of the role of media education in promoting active citizenship.

Skills and Gaps in Media Education

Analysis of the responses revealed gaps in media literacy among the participants. Many reported never having taken part in formal courses on the subject, indicating an urgent need to develop critical skills to assess the veracity of information. When asked about the criteria used to judge the credibility of a piece of news or information, the participants showed a significant dependence on the authority of the source, as illustrated in table 1:

Table 1
Criteria used to judge the credibility of the source

Answer	Participants	%
Authority of the source (reputation of the author or media outlet)	16	31,37
Accuracy of the details provided	9	17,65
Presence of verifiable evidence	9	17,65
Style and quality of the text (grammatical errors, exaggerations, etc.)	9	17,65
Other	0	0
Total	**43**	

Note. Participants' answers, where they could write down more than one answer option.

This distribution suggests that although participants use a variety of criteria, there is a strong emphasis on the reputation of the source, which may limit their ability to critically evaluate information from lesser-known or alternative sources.

Interest in Media Education

A particularly encouraging result was the high level of interest shown by participants in a media education course, where 48% of participants expressed definite interest, 43% indicated that they might be interested and only 9% showed no interest. This result suggests fertile ground for the implementation of media education programs at CMCT Itaim Paulista, in line with Santana's (2021) view of the need for media literacy in youth and adult education.

Structural and Pedagogical Challenges

Documentary analysis and participant observation revealed structural challenges in relation to the design of this model of school unit, which operates with a lean administrative team, made up of a school manager, a secretary and five school agents where, notably, there is an absence of a professional dedicated to pedagogical guidance, which, according to Ribeiro, Baptista and Ribeiro (2021), can negatively impact both pedagogical practices and teacher training.

This structural gap presents an additional challenge for the effective implementation of media education programs, highlighting the need for a look that considers not only the curriculum content, but also the professional development of educators and the administrative structure of the institution.

Discussion and Conclusions

Perceptions and Media Awareness

The results obtained in this case study at CMCT Itaim Paulista reveal a complex interaction between the participants' perceptions of media and information, their current skills and the gaps identified in relation to media education. These findings offer us ideas for developing media education programs in contexts of socio-economic vulnerability.

The awareness shown by the participants about the importance of the media in their daily lives, as well as their concerns about the risks associated with a lack of understanding of the media, aligns with Buckingham's (2019) view of the role of media education in promoting active citizenship. The statement by a participant, referred to as "C G1", about the "extreme risks" associated with a lack of knowledge about the media resonates with Castells' (2003) perspective on the challenges of the network society.

This critical awareness is a promising starting point for the development of media education programs. However, as Santana (2021) argues, it is necessary to go beyond mere awareness, developing practical skills in media analysis and production.

Skills and Gaps in Media Education

The significant reliance on the authority of the source as the main criterion for judging the credibility of information, as evidenced in Table 1, suggests a limited approach to critical evaluation of the media. This excessive reliance on "authoritative" sources can leave individuals vulnerable to disinformation coming from sources.

Nicacio (2019) emphasizes the importance of developing critical analysis skills that go beyond simply checking the source. An effective media education program should therefore focus on developing a diverse set of evaluation skills, including cross-checking information, analyzing evidence and understanding the mechanisms of media production and distribution.

Interest and Potential for Media Education

The high level of interest shown by participants in a media education course (91% expressing definite or potential interest) suggests fertile ground for the implementation of such programs. This interest is in line with the vision of Freire (1967), who emphasizes the importance of education as an act of freedom and self-discovery.

The age, gender and socio-economic diversity of the public served by CMCT Itaim Paulista presents both challenges and opportunities, since this diversity requires a pedagogical approach that takes into account the varied experiences and contexts of the students and allows for the exchange of experiences and life perspectives unique to each age group.

The urgency of media education for students and professionals is reinforced by real cases and reports that highlight the dangers of disinformation. For example, during the outbreak of cases of Monkeypox, the popular monkey pox, the spread of misinformation about public health demonstrated how a lack of media literacy can have serious consequences, where the World Health Organization issued alerts[a] indicating that misinformation negatively impacted safety measures, highlighting the need for critical skills in evaluating online information.

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[a] Wave of misinformation about Mpox causes WHO to issue alert . Available at https://oglobo.globo.com/saude/noticia/2024/08/24/oms-faz-alerta-sobre-enxurrada-de-informacoes-falsas-sobre-mpox.ghtml

In the context of CMCT Itaim Paulista, a qualification course that includes media education can enable students to become not only critical consumers of information, but also responsible producers of content. In areas of socio-economic vulnerability, such as the far east of the city of São Paulo, where access to accurate information and the ability to discern fact from fiction are deficient, it can generate community empowerment and the creation of channels and vehicles for active citizenship and the promotion of democracy.

Implementing a course focused on creating media content can also foster students' creativity and personal expression, allowing them to tell their own stories and address local issues through a critical lens. This not only enriches cyberspace with diverse perspectives, but also strengthens social cohesion by promoting mutual understanding and dialog.

In addition, reports on similar initiatives in other regions show that media education can significantly increase employment opportunities. Professionals who master digital communication skills are more valued in today's job market, which demands skills in digital marketing, social media management and audiovisual content production.

Therefore, the interest and potential of a professional qualification course at CMCT is clear. By integrating media education, the course can meet students' immediate needs, preparing them for the challenges of the job market and enabling them to contribute to a more democratic cyberspace, which not only benefits individuals, but also strengthens the community as a whole, promoting a society resilient to the growing waves of media and information manipulation.

Implications for Practice

Based on these results and discussions, we propose the following recommendations for the development of media education programs at CMCT Itaim Paulista and in similar contexts:

- Development of an integrated curriculum that addresses not only technical skills, but also critical thinking and digital civic participation.
- Implementation of pedagogical strategies that take into account the diversity of the target audience, using active and participatory methodologies.
- Investment in continuing training for educators, with a focus on media education and digital technologies.
- Establishing partnerships with local organizations and higher education institutions to fill the gap in specialized pedagogical guidance.
- Creating opportunities for students to apply their media education skills in practical projects relevant to their community.

Implications for Public Policies and Educational Practices

Based on the results of this study, we propose the following recommendations for public policies and educational practices:

- Curriculum integration: Media education must be integrated across the board in the curricula of youth and adult education, not just as an isolated subject, but as a fundamental competence in all areas of study.
- Training educators: It is necessary to invest in the continuing training of educators in media education, training them not only in technical skills, but also in critical and participatory pedagogy.

- Institutional partnerships: Establishing partnerships with civil society organizations, higher education institutions and technology companies can help bridge gaps in resources and *expertise*.
- Continuous evaluation and research: Implement continuous evaluation and action-research mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of media education programs and adapt them to the changing needs of students and society.
- Digital inclusion policies: Develop policies that guarantee equitable access to digital technologies and the internet, recognizing that effective media education requires access to a variety of information sources.

Directions for Future Research

This study paves the way for several lines of future research:

- Longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of media education programs on participants' civic participation and employment.
- Comparative research between different socio-economic contexts to identify effective media education strategies in different environments.
- Investigations into the role of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, in media education and their implications for the training of students and educators.
- Studies on the intersection between media education and its correlates, such as MIL (Media and Information Literacy), Media Literacy and Educommunication.

We end by emphasizing the urgency of media education to promote active citizenship and social inclusion in contexts of socio-economic vulnerability. By addressing the challenges identified and capitalizing on the interest shown by participants, it is possible to develop educational interventions that not only improve media literacy skills, but also promote active participation in contemporary digital society. As educators and researchers, we have a responsibility to continue exploring and implementing innovative approaches that empower all members of society to critically navigate the complex media environment of the 21st century.

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