

# THE MEDIA PRODUCTION HIVE: USING MEDIA EDUCATION FOR DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

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## SOMMARIO

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Dal momento che la nostra comprensione dei bisogni individuali degli studenti sta aumentando, la media education deve riflettere sulle proprie pratiche per soddisfare i bisogni di tutti gli studenti in classe. L'articolo consiste in una riflessione su diciotto anni di insegnamento di produzione mediale con adolescenti e giovani adulti a scuola, fuori dalla scuola e all'università. Utilizzando il framework teorico dell'Universal Design for Learning (Rose & Meyer, 2002), l'autore condivide la sua pedagogia inclusiva che mira a corrispondere ai bisogni di tutti gli studenti attraverso la media education. Il modello di insegnamento del Media Production Hive descritto in questo articolo include sette momenti: esplorare, empatizzare, pianificare, produrre, organizzare, condividere e essere attivi sul piano civico. Passando attraverso questi step, l'articolo illustra come un media educator può differenziare il proprio intervento istruttivo fornendo agli studenti molteplici opportunità di coinvolgimento, rappresentazione ed espressione. Mentre il modello del Media Production Hive è stato applicato con successo per l'individualizzazione dei percorsi formativi in una varietà di contesti, esso deve essere ulteriormente indagato sul piano qualitativo e quantitativo per avanzare nella comprensione e pratica della media education per tutti.

## PAROLE CHIAVE

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Produzione mediale, media literacy, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), funzionamento esecutivo, Media Production Hive

## ABSTRACT

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As our understanding of individual students' needs is increasing, media education should reflect on its practices to address needs of all students in the classroom. This article is a reflection on eighteen years of teaching media production with adolescents and young adults in schools, out of schools, and at the college level. Using the theoretical framework of Universal Design for Learning (Rose & Meyer, 2002), the author shares his inclusive pedagogy that aims to address all students' needs while teaching media production. The teaching model of the Media Production Hive described in the article includes seven stages: exploring, empathizing, planning, producing, organizing, sharing, and being civically active. Through each step, the article describes how a media educator can differentiate her instruction by providing her students with multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression. While the Media Production Hive model has been successful as a differentiated instruction pedagogy in a variety of contexts, it should be examined qualitatively and quantitatively to advance our understanding and practice of media education for all students.

## KEYWORDS

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Media production, media literacy, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), executive functioning, Media Production Hive

## **1** Introduction

If you entered my undergraduate classroom in TV production, you would see students are busy as bees working on a variety of floating activities. Every student is working on something different eventually contributing to her group's final project that is, just like a bee hive, a result of collaborative work of many individuals. However, this was not always the case. Eighteen years ago, as a new teacher in the Israeli educational system, I was struggling to find the best way to accommodate my students' learning. It was not until I guided an after-school media production program for students with special needs that I started to think about the diversity of learning habits and strengths. In the last two decades, I have worked in Israel and the US with students who are on the autism spectrum, gifted students, students with learning disabilities, immigrants, students with emotional and behavioral disorders, students with visual impairment or hearing loss, and students who are cognitively challenged. Some of them might be considered as needing special education; however, each one of them had a unique need that had to be addressed for them to succeed. I hope that this paper will be applicable to media production in different contexts around the world.

The field of media education has significantly developed in the last three decades thanks to the increased concerns about children and adolescents' use of digital media, as well as the growth of scholarship and practice of digital and media literacy. And yet, only a few of these evidence-based publications and methods addressed the use of media by children and adolescents with special needs. More guidelines are needed for special educators who use media in their classroom. It is difficult to address all the students' needs when teaching in an inclusive class or a special education class, but being able to do that is essential if we want to help each person we teach.

The goal of special education is to serve students with special needs. While the term excludes such students from typical education, it aims to support growth by addressing the children and adolescents' disabilities. When we talk about disability, it is important to note that disability has many aspects and characteristics. According to the World Health Organization (2011), approximately fifteen percent of the world population has a disability. And yet, only fifteen percent of people with disabilities are born with them (Siebers, 2008). Since disabilities include physical, mental, cognitive, and emotional aspects, people with various disabilities do not always see themselves as part of the same group. Disability crosses boundaries of gender, sex, race, ethnicity, and class. In this paper, I review the practice of a collaborative media production as it applies to Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Based on my eighteen years of teaching media production and studying the field of media literacy, I offer a practical model with theoretical justification. This is a reflective article that presents a feasible pedagogy of media production for teenagers and young adults while addressing every student's need.

## **2** Differentiated Instruction & Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

The concept of differentiated instruction (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006) refers to the pedagogical practice that allows teaching the same material via various strategies that cumulatively address needs and learning types of each student in the classroom. The idea behind differentiated instruction is to use the best approach for each learner. This approach demands from the teacher to acknowledge all the various types of learners in his class, such as visual learners, auditory learners, write-read learners, and kinesthetic learners, following Gardner's (1983) multiple intelligence theory, which claims that each individual has a unique set of intelligences.

Rose and Meyer (2002) applied differentiated instruction to the educational practice calling it Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Drawing on the brain research that shows various ways of receiving, processing, and expressing information by different learners (Kandel, Schwartz, & Jessell, 2000; Petersen, Fox, Posner, Mintun, & Raichle, 1988), the concept of UDL offers three major focuses: engagement, representation, and expression.

### **2.1** *Multiple Means of Engagement*

In order to have learners' attention and investment, it is important to offer various ways in which the students can choose to engage in the process of learning. This means focusing on affective networks of the brain.

It is not uncommon for teachers to prioritize content over clearly stating the purpose of learning it. Moreover, in many professional development workshops for teachers, the practice is to delve into instructional strategies without paying much attention to the reason for learning. If students do not know why it is important to learn a certain skill or information, they are often disengaged. Students will be attentive and invested if they know how the class is relevant to their lives.

Students' needs and motivations should be addressed by offering multiple means of engagement. Since every student has her own history and ambition, it is important to address various aspects of each topic in order to connect teaching practices to every student's context. Once all students are engaged, invested, and attentive, they are ready to receive and process information offered by the teacher.

### **2.2** *Multiple Means of Representation*

By providing students with various representations of the same material, the teacher addresses different types of learners in the classroom. This aspect of UDL is based on our understanding of the recognition networks in the brain, which are in charge of locating, analyzing, and evaluating information.

Typically, in a classroom, students have different ways of processing information. Thus, having the same material represented in multiple ways helps each student to process it. It is common for educators to transfer their knowledge to students via lecturing or using visual aids such as a video, presentation or text book. Having multiple means of representation not only guarantees that each learner processes information in the best way they can, but it also provides repetition of the topic in various ways to deepen understanding.

### **2.3** *Multiple Means of Expression and Actions*

Once students are engaged and are processing information, it is crucial to allow them to show their learning. This aspect of UDL is based on our understanding of the strategic network of the brain, which promotes students' communication skills. Students need to organize recently acquired knowledge in a strategic way and communicate their understanding to the teacher. Traditionally, a writing assignment or exam would test students' learning. However, offering multiple ways of expression provides each student with an opportunity to communicate their learning using their own strengths and particular intelligence (Gardner, 1983).

Rose and Meyer (2002) created a detailed pathway for teachers to apply UDL using assistive technology. They offered examples of how technology helps to create engagement, various representations, and multiple means of expression. They looked at technology as a way to replace or expand instructional strategies of traditional education. I argue that, as media educators, we should use media tools not only as assistive technology, but also for implementation of media literacy practices. The next section explains how this can be done.

## **3** **Media Education and UDL**

When we look at the current state of media education, we usually discuss students' digital and media literacy competencies that include the abilities to access, analyze, create, reflect upon, and act on media messages (Hobbs, 2010). Media education practices involve demystifying media messages and learning to use media wisely through activities of evaluation, composition, introspection, and civic engagement. By combining media education practices with the advocacy of UDL, we will have a powerful pedagogy that will not only promote students' learning, but also use inclusion and differentiated instruction to help students become active citizens in the digital era.

Little has been written on the connection between UDL and media education. However, the links between the instructional design of lessons for all students and the critical analysis, expression, and reflection on media messages are gradually explored (Dalton, 2017). What is more, the connection between media production process and UDL can advance students' media literacy skills (Leach, 2017).

Media production is the process of composing a message via a single or various media platforms. Media production includes creating videos, podcasts, presentations, posters, drawings, and books. With the increasing use of digital devices and applications, students are engaged in various ways to convey their messages using multiple ways of expression and multiple types of representations. Whereas each student can produce one’s own message, this article looks at media production as a team-based educational process. The educational process of producing media collaboratively differs from the traditional industry model (pre-production, production, post-production). The media production process in the classroom is designed as an educational method with a goal to enhance students’ media literacy skills. I proposed using a model called the Media Production Hive (Table 1).

TABLE 1  
**The Media Production Hive**

| Engagement          | Representation | Expression   |
|---------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Access              | Analyze        | Explore      |
| Ideate              | Brainstorm     | Empathize    |
| Take Responsibility | Negotiate      | Plan         |
| Create              | Collaborate    | Produce      |
| Edit                | Monitor        | Organize     |
| Reflect             | Feedback       | Share        |
| Social Commitment   | Citizenship    | Civic Action |

Note: Retrieved from [digitalempathy.net/hive](http://digitalempathy.net/hive)

## **4** Media Production Hive and UDL

Building upon the digital and media literacy competencies (Hobbs, 2010) and the research on executive functioning (Roth, Isquith, & Gioia, 2014) the Media Production Hive consists of seven educational stages that, similarly to a beehive, are built upon each other. Students first learn to explore media tools and techniques to have access to the technology and critical view of the production process. On the next stage participants brainstorm ideas, and in the process, learn to empathize with their target audience as well as with their team members. Once the idea is in place, students negotiate roles and plan the production. When the production plan is set, participants create their messages in various ways from their initial plan into one coherent artistic form. Having the raw footage, students learn to organize it into a coherent message in the process of editing it. Then they share their finalized media product with the chosen target audience, which allows them to engage in a deep reflection on the whole process. The final stage of learning to produce media is civic engagement; with the final product in hand, students consider different ways to be socially responsible and civically engaged.

Each one of the seven stages can be applied using UDL. In the following sections I explain how in each one of the stages the media educator can use media production to offer multiple ways of engagement, types of representations, and forms of expression and actions. Obviously, there can be other ways to offer UDL as part of a media production process. And yet, this is a recommendation based on my own experience.

## **4.1** *Stage 1: Explore*

The first stage is exploring the opportunities that media production has to offer. Unlike professional media makers, students have to learn the craft as they go. This means learning how to access media tools such as operating a camera or using a software. At the same time, students should learn how to analyze other media messages in order to be inspired from other examples made by professional or amateur. During this stage, students go through a process that helps them locate information they need and apply it to their own practice. Through the trial and error, students experiment with the tools and information they found in various ways until they feel equipped to start working on their own media production.

### **Engagement: Accessing the Tools**

There are multiple ways of engagement for participants who want to have access to media. The process of trial and error can be engaging as an experiment for students who like to be adventurous or as a methodological process of learning a new skill in stages. When introducing a new tool, whether it is an application on a mobile device, a digital camera, or editing software on a computer, students can choose their own way to engage in learning to operate the tools. In my classes, I usually offer three major ways to engage in exploring a new tool: written guide, video tutorial, and direct instruction. I found that students vary in their needs for engagement. Providing an option for each student makes it easier to differentiate my instruction. A written guide is a text with images illustrating each step. A video tutorial is an audio-visual text documenting each step of the process through screencasting. Using direct instruction, I go over each step and at the same time answer questions that come up from the class. Having multiple options to scaffold students' exploration of their ability to access the equipment and technology promote participants' engagement in the initial stage of media production.

### **Representation: Analyzing Diverse Sources**

Students come from diverse backgrounds, and so having multiple means of representations allows each one to better analyze existing media messages. Having an example of a short video analyzed by the students can enhance their understanding of how the cinematography tells a story, while for another student having a storyboard of the shoots would be easier. Students can explore in

various ways how they can convey a message. The media educator should allow each student to discover their own way to access the tools and analyze media messages. Students have a variety of texts that address visual, audio, and kinesthetic reception. For the purpose of analyzing media texts to learn from experts, students can watch a multimedia text, read a book, listen to a podcast, or interview a cinematographer. By matching a suitable representation of texts, students can find inspiration in others in order to get ready for their own production.

### **Expression: Exploring Your Option**

It is equally important to give students opportunities to demonstrate their learning by offering multiple ways of expression. Before participants get to the production stage, they should be able to access tools they will need. For example, in my TV production class, I offer students various ways to showcase their ability to write a script, control a camera, use light, direct actors, interview a subject, edit on a computer, design the sound, etc. Students use technology to show how to apply tools they chose while providing written and oral examples of various uses. In addition, my students present via sound, visual or demonstration how their analysis of exemplary media messages has inspired them to create their own message.

Once students have explored the various ways to access the tools and the numerous techniques to analyze messages, they are ready to start thinking about their own project. The exploration stage has paved the way to compose their own messages. The combination of being inspired by others with knowing the craft helps participants to start thinking of how they can convey their message to their target audience.

## **4.2 Stage 2: Empathize**

The second stage involves students empathizing with their target audience in order to generate their idea for the production. In the world of design this brainstorming process is called *ideation* (IDEO, 2014). To ideate means to come up with a sense of the story, its purpose and structure. In order to achieve this clarity, a basic media literacy practice is to identify your target audience and empathize with them to better understand their experience. By putting themselves into their target audience's shoes, students can start thinking about their purpose, their story, and most importantly, about how their message will be perceived. The complexity of the empathy process opens the door for multiple means of engagement, representations, and expression.

### **Engagement: Generating Ideas**

Typically, students first generate an idea before sharing it with the group. There are many ways to engage students in generating ideas. In my work with young adults, I use questions to engage them into thinking of ideas for their production. For instance, I offer an associations game based on a word or sentence. Some stu-

dents prefer to answer a practical question by conducting research (reading books, watching movies, or even creating a survey) on the topic. Some prefer to share their ideas by talking about inspiring examples, such as classic movies. Having a variety of options allows the teacher to show that she appreciates each student's individual ideas, as she offers everyone a suitable way to engage in generating their ideas.

### **Representation: Brainstorming Ideas**

When students are brainstorming ideas, they should consider how diverse viewers would react to their message. Brainstorming is a process of sharing thoughts that are built upon each other. In order to achieve a deep empathic process that values each team member's ideas, students need to have a respectful strategy for sharing their thoughts. My favorite way of using multiple types of representation during the brainstorming process is by having students answer two questions about their idea: What points of view, values, and lifestyle are represented in your message? How might various people interpret your message differently? (Hobbs, 2011). The main goal of these questions is to allow each student to experience the complexity of interpretations of their future media message, and to build upon each other's ideas. Students can offer their answer as a written text, speech, or role-play.

### **Expression: Empathizing with Target Audience**

By demonstrating their ability to empathize with their target audience, students can not only better articulate their message but also formulate their purpose by considering the intended impact as well as some of the unintended consequences. Offering the option to have multiple means of expression provides students with a deeper empathic experience seeing that everyone in the class has another way to express their learning. I offer to my students three main techniques for them to express their empathy: role-play, active listening, and self-reflection. Role-playing is a dramatic expression of how a specific person from the target audience would react to the message: one of the students can take the role of this imaginary person in front of the group or use a game to play a character (Feinstein, Mann, & Corsun, 2002). Active listening (also called reflective listening or empathic listening) involves a process of sensing, processing and responding (Drollinger, Comer, & Warrington, 2006). By having a dialogue based on active listening, students can hear how others might perceive their idea differently. Self-reflection demands from students to use introspection as they think of how the proposed idea for media message would affect them if they were the target audience (Neomy, 2005).

Having the opportunity to empathize in a variety of ways of engagement, representation, and expression provide participants with a deep understanding of their target audience. This allows them not only to effectively convey their message, but also to acknowledge its complexity and the possibility of unintended consequences. Connected to the seventh stage (civic engagement) that I explain below, the Empathize stage teaches students to be socially responsible

and thoughtful about the responsibility of a media producer. After agreeing on the idea and the intended purpose of the message, students can distribute roles and start to plan the production.

### **4.3 Stage 3: Plan**

In the third stage, as students plan for their production, they need to negotiate their roles and responsibilities. The process of negotiation brings their group dynamic to a new level of intensity. In order to get along and be efficient, participants ideally should divide their labor and roles equally. Nevertheless, it is important to take into consideration different personalities and needs, and distribute responsibilities and labor based upon strengths of each group member. The negotiation is not a conflict that needs to be solved, but rather a collective dialogue with the purpose to find the best way to utilize various talents in the group.

#### **Engagement: Taking Responsibility**

Before starting to negotiate and plan, students have to take responsibility for their roles. It can be easy for some students but highly challenging for others. The media educator should offer multiple ways of engagement to allow all the group members to take roles. It can be done through a group discussion, filling out an online or print survey, or starting the discussion in pairs and then continuing it in a larger group. Any path that provides a committed engagement to one role and its responsibilities would eventually bring the group to work together on planning their production. Without engagement, there is not going to be any commitment and team work. Insuring the collective engagement is part of the negotiation process that is necessary for planning the production.

#### **Representation: Negotiating Responsibilities**

In order to keep the group dynamics positive and fruitful, each member should have an opportunity to choose his favorite way to share with others how he contributes to the collective and what he needs from the others for the project to succeed. Each team member chooses their own way to represent their responsibility connected to their role and the final product. In order to plan a production (scriptwriting, storyboarding, acting, set designing, editing, sound designing, and distribution), there must be an option for each team member to represent their part in the future production. A PowerPoint presentation or a book also needs a narrative, design, editing, and distribution. Each team member follows one role and its responsibilities; meaning that they provide the particular representation of their part of the plan. One student can choose to draw the storyboard while another one will use a digital application, yet another participant might choose to write it as a text. Having multiple means of representation showcases the importance of each component and the way it fits into the whole process. This is the stage where changes to the production can still be made.

## Expression: Planning the Production

Once the roles and responsibilities are clear, the team can start planning their production. Each team member should express her needs and responsibilities in a way that is most convenient for her to help build the plan. Students can use either a flow chart, or a list with infographics, or an annotated video to showcase what they are going to do, as well as when and what they need from other team members. Planning can be structured in various ways. As a team, all the members should be aware of each other's and their own responsibilities. I want to emphasize that there must be a structured plan, and yet this plan will become a basis for changes as the production is a flexible process.

Negotiation on creative ideas can trigger a conflict (Friesem, 2014). The main goal of the third stage is to allow each member to showcase her contribution to the project as well as to ask for what she needs to accomplish her task. By allowing multiple ways of engagement, each team member is personally committed; applying multiple types of representation creates a more accurate plan for a multifaceted production; using multiple ways of expression clarifies to the group and each member what each role encompasses as responsibilities and needs. Once the plan is ready, students can create their message as each team member assumes her role.

### **4.4** *Stage 4: Produce*

The fourth stage is the creation of the planned message; it involves documenting the idea via recording, writing, drawing, assembling, or coding. Each student assumes his role and together they all create their planned message. Naturally, not everything works as expected; however, having gone through the first three stages, students can navigate towards the message they wanted to convey. Composing a message is a delicate stage when each member has to be valued for their role and responsibility. Since each member is in charge of a part of the bigger production, they need multiple ways of engagement, representation, and expression.

## Engagement: Creating Your Message

Each team member engages with the creative production differently. The media educator should promote their personal engagement helping students to complement each other. In a video production, the producer, director, cinematographer, actors, art director, editor, and sound designer have each a different way to engage and fulfill their responsibility. Similarly, in a podcast, the scriptwriter, director, narrator, sound engineer, editor, and producer each have a distinct way to engage with the project.

## Representation: Collaborating to Assemble Messages

Each member represents one aspect of the production as a whole. The power of the teamwork manifests itself as each person provides multiple ways of representation of the same message. When creating a book, the writer, illustrator/

photographer, editor, and publisher share the message, but at the same time approach it from their unique points of view and roles. Each one contributes to the endeavor by representing a complimentary angle. As all the representations come together in the creation stage, the raw materials – be it a video footage, audio files, drawings, presentations slides, photographs, or written text – comes to life as a result of a collaborative effort.

### **Expression: Producing One Message**

Each team member expresses her part in the production by acting out her responsibility. As the production progresses, it generates various materials coming from each member's creative expression. When composing a picture, the producer take care of logistics, the photographer uses the light and composition, the actors use their facial expression and body posture, and the set designer uses the location and props. Being able to express their creativity within their own strengths enables students to collaborate better.

During the delicate stage of creation, each member is not only in charge of their own responsibilities for being engaged, represent, and express their role. Similar to the film industry, each team member also accepts the inclusion strategy that celebrates the various points of view and strengths of each member (Bechky, 2002). From the assemblage of the raw materials comes the next stage: organizing it into the intended message.

## **4.5 Stage 5: Organize**

Based on the previous stages, the fifth stage focuses on organizing the raw materials through an editing process that will eventually convey the message that the team decided to share. In the process of editing, students revisit the purpose of the message and how different target audiences might comprehend it differently. The group members come together and suggest ways to achieve the intended purpose using raw materials they created on the previous stage. Having different roles allows each team member to provide input from their particular position and perspective.

### **Engagement: Editing the Raw Materials**

Typically, editing is a one-person task accomplished in front of a computer. Nonetheless, each team member can work on a protocol in various ways such as written plan, flow chart, or rough cut (McDonald, Mohr, Dichter, & McDonald, 2013). Each member should offer his perspective that will contribute to the final product.

### **Representation: Monitoring the Work**

Each perspective shared with the group contributes to a multilayered message that will be effective for reaching the target audience. Each member represents a different point of view that should be valued and taken into account in

the editing process. Each student monitors how she is editing, and at the same time keeps track of her team members' contributions. Like in a hive, the director might focus on the acting, the cinematographer on light and composition, the sound designer on the audio, and the editor looks for ways to combine all aspects together.

### **Expression: Organizing the Message**

Because the diversity of perspectives can create conflicts between team members, it is important to allow each person to express their ideas and accept compromises for the sake of the collaboratively created message (Friesem, 2014). The technical editing process of organizing all the elements into a coherent message can be done in multiple ways. Each team member can organize various parts such as the title, visuals, audio, and the narrative structure. Eventually, the editor will combine it together taking into consideration perspectives and diverse ways of expression of each team member.

Editing by definition means that some parts will be included when other will be omitted. This is why there should be an open dialogue among the team members about the editing decisions. It is important to keep the inclusive practice of valuing each member's particular way of engagement, representation, and expression. At the same time, each team member has to understand that they are working collaboratively to convey a message, and collaboration means compromises. In order to be effective communicators, each participant will have to reflect on their part and on how he or she will contribute to sharing the message.

## **4.6 Stage 6: Share**

On the sixth stage, students share their finished product while reflecting on their successes and their challenges in conveying their message. Sharing can be done in multiple ways; same is true about the team members' reflection. Looking at the audience reaction can help students better understand how their final product might influence other people. This can be done with a specific component or the whole product. Since the audience is composed of various individuals, their interpretations and feedback can come in multiple ways of engagement, representation, and expression.

### **Engagement: Reflecting on Your Part**

The engagement of each team member after the editing is focused on their self-reflection. The more variety of options for reflection, the greater the engagement will be. Students can write, record, speak, draw, or demonstrate what they experienced during the production. Allowing multiple ways to reflect promote the students' understanding of the stages and collaboration of the production process.

### **Representation: Giving and Receiving Feedback**

Each platform that is used to distribute the product helps getting multiple forms of feedback. Based on the audience and team member's diversity, each one provides a different feedback in regards to the quality of the process and the finished product. The feedback should be empathic and respectful, using praises and suggestions to enhance the learning (Friesem & Green, 2013) Taking into consideration that each individual from the target audience might have a different way to perceive the message, it is important for the group to practice receiving multiple forms of feedback.

### **Expression: Sharing Your Work**

Sharing a media product can be done through a variety of platforms. With the increasing number of digital forms of distribution, the group can use video, websites, social media, podcasts, or print. Each single audience member can express their opinion about the final media product in various ways. In the era of social media, anyone can reflect on this product using text, sound, or visuals. The team members should embrace the diversity of opinions, as they remain thoughtful and respectful. In their own way, the team members should practice an open dialogue using multiple ways of expression to reflect on their success and challenges.

The reflection on the effectiveness of the produced message enhances students' media literacy skills (Shiebe & Rogow, 2011). Participants review how they have learned the tools, analyzed other messages, ideated, negotiated responsibilities, planned, created, and edited the message that was distributed to their target audience. This review showcases the variety of points of views and reveals how a collaborative effort generated their messages. Nevertheless, the last stage of the process includes students' engagement in social action.

## **4.7 Stage 7: Act**

The seventh stage includes translating the distribution and its impact into a civic action by engaging broader audience for a social change. Being media literate is not only the individual's ability to access, analyze create, and reflect. It is also about being able to be socially responsible as contributing citizens (Hobbs, 2010).

### **Engagement: Social Commitment**

Students might not understand why they need to be committed to their peers or community. This is why it is important to reflect on the whole process of collaborating on a media production using UDL to emphasize the practice of inclusion. As each student shares their experience and sees how each team member has been a valuable part of the group, they can acknowledge and understand the value of inclusion.

## Representation: Becoming a Democratic Citizen

In a democratic society, each citizen has privileges and duties. The media production provides a micro cosmos for each student to practice compromises and empowerment as a team member. Each student represents a different practice and approach as a contributing member of the team. The experience of having multiple means of representation of citizenship not only celebrates inclusion, but also prepares the students for the life in a democratic society.

## Expression: Civic Action

By applying everything they have learned about inclusion and multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression, students can use their product to reach diverse populations beyond their target audience. By using multiple means of expression such as social media, digital technologies, as well as printed platforms, students civically engage in spreading a message of inclusion. Media production has been shown to increase students' civic engagement (Hobbs, Donnelly, Friesem, & Moen, 2013). Nevertheless, making the production an exercise in community engagement is not always possible. Therefore, having a successful media production based on the principles of inclusiveness should be emphasized and celebrated.

## Implications for future research and practice

Implementing UDL for media production in the classroom is not without challenges. Group dynamics often reveal power struggles among team members (Friesem, 2014). The responsibility of the media educator, who is not a mediator by training, is to find the way to mitigate the tension caused by differences among group members (Friesem, 2010). In addition, students have the tendency to use media production as a transgressive practice (Moore, 2011; Grace & Tubin, 1998). This means that the media educator needs to act as a facilitator – allowing and promoting students' exploration of content and format they are working with. While students should have control over the content and format of their media messages, the media educator at the same time should model and lead the way of the production process.

Facilitating the process of production involves constant reflection on the classroom power relationship using critical and pragmatic lenses. The critical approach promotes the ability to analyze a situation and evaluate what works and what prevents the group from accomplishing their task. The pragmatic approach, also known as the growth mindset (Dweck, 2016), uses the critical analysis of the production process to set a path for improvement by modifying the process. Together, the critical and pragmatic aspects allow the media educator and her students to reflect on their practice and its inclusiveness.

Using UDL as an instructional strategy of media production emphasizes the inclusion of various point of view. It is the celebration of inclusion that helps students understand that transgressive messages can have an unintended consequence

of hurting others. Moreover, the critical and pragmatic analysis of each stage shows how each member has contributed to the process, as well as strengths of each team member. This promotes the collaboration by applying virtues of each team member as they contribute to the success of the group's production.

Although I had success with this process in Israel and the US, I argue that this success can be transferable to other contexts. Many international studies showcase advantages and challenges of composing media messages in groups (FisherKeller, 2011). And yet, it is hard to find a description of the process as a practice based on differentiated instruction. The idea behind UDL is that it allows each learner to utilize her strengths in order to learn and successfully complete her task. Having multiple means of engagement, representation and expression not only promotes inclusion, but also makes it transferable to other cultures and contexts.

The discourse about the implementations of UDL with digital technology has been broad and used for several research studies (Rose & Meyer, 2002). Nevertheless, in the media education community, there is not enough discussion regarding how enhancing students' media literacy skills can be part of inclusive pedagogy. In today's polarized world, where taking a selfie is more valued than having a deep conversation (Turkle, 2016), we should focus on the affordances of media production for bringing people together. The article framed the Media Production Hive as a way to implement UDL in the classroom based on my own experience as a media teacher in the last eighteen years. Reflecting on my practice via this theoretical framework brings new questions of how to implement UDL for media production in various contexts. We need to conduct more studies using ethnographic methods to explore how UDL and media production work together, as well as quantitative studies to assess media literacy skills of each team member. It is essential to investigate how each element of the Media Production Hive provides a place to celebrate diversity, and how building upon each team member's strength can offer students with disabilities an equal place to be creative, included, and above all to practice media literacy like their peers.

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