

Arts education can provide creative counter narratives against hate speech

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Hate, as an emotion, is not an efficient response to ideological hate speech. Instead, using tools that hate speakers cannot use may undermine hate speakers' credibility. The arts have the potential to provide a more positive means of communication.

Hate speech has become a growing topic of discussion on a global scale, especially as advances in the internet have transformed communication on many levels. Nowadays, it's easy to spread [hate speech](#) on user-generated and anonymous online platforms.

A practical and creative way for [policy-makers](#) to raise awareness of these issues is to create culturally sensitive and effective counter narratives with the help of arts education. It also helps teachers empower students to fight against hate speech.

According to research, teachers have seen positive results from educating their pupils about cyberbullying, but they need additional training to gain more knowledge on how to reduce involvement in and long-term exposure to bullying.

This is where arts education can make a difference, because banning hate speech doesn't reach the roots of hatred, says doctoral candidate Tuula Jääskeläinen from the University of the Arts Helsinki.

According to Jääskeläinen's paper 'Countering hate speech through arts and arts education', art can provide a space to support diverse viewpoints that can question hate speakers' simplified generalisations. Arts education can offer ways to disclose what is hidden and give tools to examine the ignorance, misunderstandings, and false beliefs within the historical and cultural contexts of hate speech.

Over the years, people have come up with clever solutions to strengthen solidarity. In the Council of

Europe's Living Library, one can 'borrow' people instead of books. In this case, the people may be victims of hate speech or activists in combating hate [speech](#), for example. In Finland, there is a community called ByHelpers, which fights against the bystander effect by encouraging people to help strangers in [everyday life](#).

Recent research provides evidence that people's greater engagement with the arts often leads to greater pro-sociality through volunteering and charitable giving. Furthermore, research shows that children and young people who have been involved with arts in school become more active and engaged citizens than their less artistically involved peers when it comes to voting, volunteering, and general participation in society. Therefore, Jääskeläinen concludes that art can act as an important socio-psychological catalyst towards a cohesive and socially prosperous society.

More information: Tuula Jääskeläinen, Countering hate speech through arts and arts education, *Policy Futures in Education* (2019). [DOI: 10.1177/1478210319848953](#)

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