Diversity and credibility in young people’s news feeds: A foundation for teaching and learning citizenship in a digital era

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# Abstract

Purpose: The credibility of digital news is presently a topic of debate, and curricula underline the importance of media literacy. However, the content and credibility of young people’s news feeds have not been investigated in detail in any large-scale studies. Here we explore the nature of news featured in Swedish upper secondary school students’ news feeds, how news is shared, and how credible the news is according to the students.
Approach: Using citizen science and a mixed methods approach we review 2617 news from authentic news feeds.
Findings: The students’ news feeds primarily contain hard news from established news media. News is predominately found on news domains, not through social media. Soft news is less common and is perceived as less credible. Boys find more sports while girls identify more entertainment and lifestyle news. The news feeds also contain some highly biased political information.
Research limitations: The study was carried out in Sweden, and further international research on authentic news feeds is needed to view results in relation to society and educational practices.
Research and practical implications: In education, students’ news feeds can be used to scrutinize credibility and help students navigate towards credible news domains to support democratic engagement.

# Outcome

Hard news made up the lion’s share of the students' feeds. There is a need to further develop the assessment protocol of news content and news form in the digital tool, dividing them into two different variables to be classified by the user. The nature of the news feeds varied between different social media channels and news found outside social media. There seemed to be a correlation between types of news and the credibility of the sources, a link between source and content that had an effect on how credibility was perceived.