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Suvi Tuominen: Beruf Medienpädagog*in: Finnland/Finland

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When I studied digital cultures as a minor subject in university back in the early 2000's, I thought it was just for fun. Learning about gaming communities, virtual relationships and fandom did not sound like something that could have any connection to any real work. And here I am, 15 years later, and those 'fun' courses have been maybe the most beneficial during my career as a media education specialist.

When I studied, there was no subject called media education available at the University of Tampere, as there is now. I had to study journalism, digital cultures and education as separate subjects and combine them in my mind. I graduated as a Master of Social Sciences and had a one year pedagogical training included in the degree. The pedagogical training was a wise thing to do, as that got me my first jobs within media education.

As a project coordinator in the Finnish Safer Internet Project, my task was to plan parental evenings and classroom plans about online safety, build up a nationwide trainer network, and train the trainers to use the classroom plans and host parental evenings. At the same time, I helped to start online youth work activities in the NGO Mannerheim League for Child Welfare I worked in. After five years, I proceeded into manager position in the same organisation and suddenly I had seven team members, who used to be my colleagues. Turned out, that I like to have that kind of responsibility and enjoy also the boring administrative stuff. And I also got good feedback from the team.

The past five and a half years I have worked as the manager in Verke – National Centre of Expertise on Digital Youth Work in Finland. I have again seven team members, who all are specialists in digital youth work. Verke's task is to educate youth workers around Finland around topics linked to digitalisation of youth work, media educational viewpoints are included. We train about 2,500 people a year, and produce printed and online materials for the youth work sector. In the latest years, video format has proven to be really effective when trying to reach youth workers.

Lately, a big theme in Verke's work has been future foresight: How does digitalisation change young people's lives in the next ten years – and how should youth work adapt to that? A recent tool that we developed for our own trainings is called Innobox and can be downloaded for free: www.verke.org/material/innobox.

Technologies like artificial intelligence, augmented reality, and virtual reality are not science fiction, they are here already. And they will have a significant impact on the society. People will have to learn to use them effectively, but also to be critical towards them. So as media and technology are taking new forms constantly, I see that the need for media education specialists will increase in the future.

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