

DIGITALIZATION AND SOCIAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT: In this article, the authors aim to show how digitalization can be harnessed to support social education, especially the social and emotional development of young people. The research is based on a study and the analysis of the responses of students from two universities, one in Romania and one in Costa Rica, thus adding an international component to the study.

KEY WORDS: digitalization, social education, emotional development.

1. INTRODUCTION

All over the world, digital transformation is having an ever-increasing impact, for all fields. People must be prepared to be able to use and be able to "take advantage" of digital technologies that are constantly developing (even if one wanted to, the process cannot be stopped, not even slowed down).

In Costa Rica, in 2006, an important reform of the educational process began, which lasted until 2018, focusing on encouraging critical thinking rather than memorization, an attitude of active involvement and finding solutions to the problems of the real world. These are also found in the recent Educate for a New Citizenship (Educar para una Nueva Ciudadanía) strategy, where additional new skills appear that need to be developed, for: digitalization, sustainable development, social inclusion (such as those related to global and local citizenship etc.) [1].

In European Union, in order to maximize the opportunities, an "Action Plan for Digital Education" was developed, through which aims to adapt the education systems to address the challenges offered by the digital transformation [2]. It is very important to there

is cooperation between EU member countries, to strengthen the exchange of information and good practices, so that people (both young people / learners, who are at the beginning of their training, and teachers or political decision makers) are ready to face these challenges.

Also in Romania, the digitalization of education has priority and it is addressed to all people in the society (for the development and improvement of digital skills throughout life), being in fact an "essential element of the development, modernization and innovation of society" [3]. Thus, starting even with primary education, Digital Education is studied in Romania [3]. Teachers use digital technologies to prepare their assignments / lessons. They also use them during the presentation of assignments / lessons to increase the interest of the learners, encourage their participation and interaction [4].

The digitalization of education leads to a paradigm shift, which occurs in all its forms: teaching, learning / accumulation / training and assessment. The use of these technologies helps to deepen, understand and retain theoretical notions.

The authors aim to conduct a study and observe the implications of digital social education on youth training. That is, it is desired to determine how the use of the Internet and digital technologies influences the promotion of the social behavior of young people [5]. It also looks at how these digital technologies can help develop skills, aptitudes and social skills, for example Top Skills and Soft Skills (Communication, Team Spirit, Leadership, Time Management, Emotional Intelligence, Conflict Management, People Management, stress, Critical thinking, Active listening, Adaptability, Flexibility, Desire for continuous development etc.) [6].

2. DIGITALIZATION OF EDUCATION

The experience with the children, both at school in the classroom and at home, but also forced by the situation with the lockdown, "it was accepted" the use of digital technologies in education. It is clear that young people "love" digital technologies and then their use in education is more than indicated, taking into account certain limits.

The limits imposed may refer, first of all, to the effective management of time and how to use, as some digital technologies are associated with leisure activities (or games), thus leading to distraction from educational activities (a survey by Global Kids Online in Costa Rica in 2023 shows that digital devices «whose frequent use is for entertainment, learning and communication» are starting to be more prominently oriented towards learning [7]). Secondly, the information provided through the use of digital technologies must be easy to understand and not abstract and/or uninteresting [8]. But in fact, digital technologies can facilitate: the diversification of innovative and engaging teaching methods, the interaction between participants during the educational process (using the idea and perception of play / joke, but, only in the sense of involvement) and the very easy and fast adaptation of information taught to the situations of the moment.

Digitalization of education means the use of digital technologies and equipment (i.e. all digital capabilities [9]) in the educational process. Calling the mechanisms and ways of

using digital technologies and all digital capabilities in order to optimize and make a process more efficient through digitalization leads to the concept of digital transformation. Digitalization of the educational process brings many advantages and benefits:

- increasing the experience and learning outcomes of learners [10];
- access to much information / materials / documents / contents from all over the world;
- facilitates the creation of diversified contents: virtual, simulations, video that help to develop practical skills;
- facilitates the creation of personalized contents;
- creating opportunities for interaction and communication between learners, including with teachers, during classes, but also outside of them;
- creating opportunities to test / evaluate and help the understanding and retention of the information received (information / knowledge / notions accumulated).

3. SOCIAL EDUCATION

Learning, as a result of education, is social and always involves a change in the learner. From the conception of social education, we speak of a pedagogy that fosters encounter, dialogue and accompaniment. Emphasis is placed on the need to educate on social values such as justice, peace, social coexistence, and solidarity [11]. Courses in social studies and civic education in Costa Rican universities differ from those in European ones in terms of terminology, functions and the academic preparation, since they do not deal in depth with social work, psychology and pedagogy [12]. In the Costa Rica formal education system, social education functions similar to those in Europe are carried out through the Community Teacher project, developed by the Ministry of Public Education and the Ministry of Justice and Peace. Primary and secondary school students are supported by the Community Teachers who currently in different areas of our country, carrying out different activities such as academic support, workshops, educational and recreational activities, socio-emotional support, among others. It is made up of psychosocial and educational professionals who promote social

inclusion, encouraging permanence in the educational system and supporting people who have dropped out to resume their studies [13].

3. PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Education has an essential role to train people, to prepare them to be inclusive and active in society/community (to have developed scientific and socio-emotional skills and competences) and to face scientific and technological events, as well as economic and socio- cultural.

The change in education was and is inevitable, being influenced by events in society (an eloquent example being given by the emerging pandemic situation) or the development of technologies, in general, which certainly have an effect on the learning and research process. Digital technologies can "help" the remodeling of the educational system, being essential in the education of the future, offering the possibility of meeting many challenges and achieving many objectives, determining the rethinking of ensuring a "complex, challenging and multidimensional framework" [14].

Since 2008, studies [15] have shown that the use of computers and digital technologies in the educational process (for teaching-learning-evaluation) was appreciated by both teachers and learners.

Digital technologies can help and influence the educational process, they can help improve student engagement, understanding and easier retention / retention of knowledge.

For a "balanced" development of the learners, the "easy reception" of knowledge through the use of digital technologies must be "counterbalanced" by a substantial involvement of them, by emphasizing critical thinking.

Therefore, the use of digital technologies must be used to facilitate the teaching-learning-evaluation process and especially to "help the merging" of educational paradigms, related to: behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, humanism. Thus, we arrive at a social education that prepares learners to: become active citizens, appreciate all cultures, have financial and entrepreneurial knowledge, i.e. to be responsible citizens for society / community.

The study conducted among the students of the "Constantin Brâncuși" University of Târgu - Jiu from Romania and of the University of Costa Rica from Costa Rica, regarding some aspects of the digitalization of social education, highlighted the following elements:

- they have access to the Internet, most of them connecting using the phone;
- through the social education which they received it, they developed the possibility to present and argue their point of view;
- they want to be able to be flexible and find solutions for a peaceful resolution of conflicts;
- they are aware of the fact that they still need to develop their social skills;
- they find digital social education more relevant than the traditional one;
- the digital social education has the advantage of allowing access to resources anytime and anywhere;
- an impediment in the development of digital social education could be the non-existence of the connection or an unstable connection to the Internet;
- they would like to have more group activities and collaborate with learners from other countries.

As a proposal for the future, it would be to carry out a SWOT analysis that captures the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of digitalization in social education.

3. CONCLUSION

The use of digital technologies has led (and continues to lead) to change the course of the teaching – learning - evaluation educational process. There are no templates on how to use and especially how to "impose" them.

The paradigm shift regarding the use of these technologies must be accepted in the sense of developing the way of thinking (critical, self-critical) and / or approaching the way of engaging the learners (to be much more extensive and personalized) and to the relationship between the ease of receiving information / knowledge (through the use of digital technologies and AI) and the need to increase learners engagement (the effort must be inversely proportional to the ease of receiving the information) to understand the information received and then for their

development, integration, summarization (which must actually be done by the learners). Students appreciate the use of digital technologies, in general in education and in particular in social education, because they come to understand more easily the knowledge about the interaction in society / community and about the financial aspects that appear in everyone's life. The international component of this study showcases the relevance that students from the two countries attributed to digital social education and international collaboration to challenge traditional learning paradigms.

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