

Digital and Media Literacy: Voices of the Teachers. Dilemmas During the Pandemic and Reflections for the Future

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Even before the outbreak of COVID-19, agendas worldwide had been emphasizing the need for the 21st century citizen to develop a wide array of competences and literacies. Hence, digital literacy is an urgency in schools, particularly for teachers, who need to be aware of the advantages and challenges posed by these new contexts, namely those emerging from the digital world. To these ends, national policies in many countries follow and connect to European guidelines. In Portugal, the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu) is largely used in teacher training. Therefore, it is important to highlight it as a key tool in the process of the capacity building for the digital transformation of the teaching and learning (Redecker, 2017).

Another transversal topic in educational contexts relates to information and media literacy, drawing from the premise that the school has an important role to play with regard to the challenges of the information society. Bearing this in mind, several authors consider that we are in an era where different competences are converging (Ala-Mutka, 2011). Moreover, Hobbs (2010) also emphasizes this diversity of interconnected concepts, which have different starting points, proposing the term “digital and media literacy” as the one that best designates the set of life skills that are necessary for full participation in a media-saturated society and simultaneously rich in information; we adopt it as an analytical category in the research put forward within the Erasmus+ project RAPIDE, Reimagining a Positive Direction for Education (2020-1-UK01-KA226-SCH-094495). For this purpose, the data were collected by all the partners, in their national contexts, namely involving teachers; in this paper, we focus on the Portuguese data, thus presenting part of the wider research.

Our study took a qualitative and interpretive approach, “attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). The complexity of the teachers’ personal experiences evidences significant insights about the role of digital and information literacy during the pandemic, besides the impact of these competencies for teaching and learning. The 20 participating teachers were invited to describe, in a written document, (1) a major challenge in their teaching practice, (2) how they responded to it, (3) how they reflected on their actions, and (4) what new insights this brought to them. The aim was to start from real situations, leading teachers to reflect on these situations in order to foster them to envision new pedagogical and didactic paths for the future. The situations experienced during the pandemic, often implying strong constraints in the teaching and learning processes, but also demanding the rapid learning of digital skills, emerge as contexts that provide scenarios that enhance a deeper reflection for the teachers’ professional development. The information gathered was analyzed with the goal of identifying issues related to digital and media literacies, stemming from the teachers’ dilemmas, as well as mapping possible lessons learned and good practices to sustain in the future.

References

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