

UNOCCUPIED CHILDREN: DIGITAL LITERACY PROJECT / HEALTH ALWAYS IN THE ACTIVE COMMUNITY LIBRARY AT JARDIM SÃO PEDRO-LIMEIRA-BRAZIL

Adriana Pessatte Azzolino

drika@widesoft.com.br

DMM IA/Unicamp posdoctoring;
CNPQ:Pedagogic Cybernetics
Research member group-ECA/USP
;Anhanguera Educational

André Teté de Souza

Andre_tete@hotmail.com

Publicist, Marketing
Specialist/ESPM and Digital
Technology Teacher; Anhanguera
Educational

Lucilene Cury

lucilene@usp.br

Sao Paulo University - ECA-USP -
Pedagogic Cybernetics: Digitals
Languages Laboratory ECA-USP;
Mentor of the Digital Literacy:
children,young and adults digital
inclusion shortcuts

Abstract

This paper presents the report of an experience of an educational practice based on citizens' attitudes, which has communication, education and technology as prerequisites for the transformation of society and takes place in a space of non-formal learning. This practice contributes to theoretical and methodological solutions to rescue elementary constituents of human beings and living conditions in their entirety from the type of organization and its context, therefore, involves the intersections between these ideas.

Keywords: digital literacy, communication and education, citizenship, civic organization, community.

Resumen

Este trabajo trae el relato de una experiencia de una práctica educativa basada en actitudes ciudadanas, que tiene la comunicación, la educación y la tecnología como presupuestos para la transformación de la sociedad y que ocurre en un espacio de aprendizaje no formal. Esta práctica aporta teórica y metodológicamente en el rescate de formas constituyentes elementares de los seres vivos y de las condiciones de vida en su totalidad, a partir del tipo de organización y de su contexto, por lo tanto, conlleva las intersecciones entre esas ideas.

Palabras clave: alfabetización digital, comunicación y educación, ciudadanía, organización civil, comunidad.

INTRODUCTION

Since the mid-nineteenth century, the great inventions and discoveries have intended to improve education. While serving the market and its confluence, they were also used, in some way, for the improvement of social relations. The telephone, for example, had the basic principle to decrease the distance between people, granting speed to the transmission of information and so on, as did the emergence of cinema and other forms of faster information transmission, which over time had other elements added to them, such as imaging. In summary, new information and communication technologies in the form of new inventions and discoveries, have always aimed to benefit humanity, each in its own way.

These means of content broadcast increasingly allow access to knowledge and its acquisition thereof, while causing and accompanying changes in the way individuals feel and behave worldwide, causing changes in biosocial/cognitive conditions in each individual's daily actions, granting amplitude and impact to their cultural practices, to the recognition of good and evil.

We live in a global society, with the flow of information, which constitutes a basic pillar, referenced by the continuously produced images, and which circulate throughout the world almost instantly. It is the mass media society, the society of generalized communication, introducing profound modifications in the set of values for humanity by establishing a new order with consequences that are not fully identified.

The so-called ICTs - Information & Communication Technologies have only evolved, but they did not approach schools in the same pace. Most schools stuck to more practical models of medieval monasteries (thirteenth and twelfth century) and not to contributions from the models resulting from the progressive nineteenth-century science (Barros, 2003). However, except for the more resistant, a lot has changed. Education has witnessed a profound revolution in the teaching practice as of the twentieth century. Technology has become the vector of a new world, a new configuration. The ways information is shared and what is communicated have undergone great changes. In addition, a new communication system that increasingly speaks a universal digital language is promoting global integration of production and distribution of words, sounds and images of our culture as well as customizing them to the tastes and moods of individuals. With the advent of computers and the Internet, information has become faster and more broad ranging.

Interactive computer networks are growing exponentially, creating new forms and channels of communication, shaping life and vice versa.

In this context, means of communication and educational practices undergo major changes. The 2.0 web, interactivity in various media and distance learning are great examples of technological innovations in this environment.

In education, a new "model" of teaching-learning environment presents itself and demands the restructuring of the information processing capacity from each of us, in other words, we are faced with the challenge of learning to learn, recombining information and (de)constructing a new school for a new education.

The concept of time changes again (the Industrial Revolution was a milestone in changing the time dedicated to living and working). Now time is once again different, with the presence of new information and communication technologies. The learning time in this cyberspace environment requires effort and dedication from various bodies,

particularly the government body. For a new way of educating, it is necessary to have new teachers trained in interactivity-based pedagogy, which assumes the use of various media, and understands the need to develop students' independent capacities to learn and think and develop citizens' attitudes and this requires the acquisition of knowledge and skills to express themselves using the "new languages". A scenario, therefore, not yet mapped out and not designed along the lines of efficiency and effectiveness.

Everything leads to redesigning the future of education and in this context, to the eternal rethinking and improving the means of communication among individuals involved in education and in the development of skills to use these new tools for learning and teaching.

Teachers/educators should always be open to dialogue, after all, education assumes communication, according to Freire, *"education is communication, it is dialogue, as it is the transfer of knowledge, but it is also an encounter between individual partners who seek meaning."* (P.69). It is understood that the teacher / educator must be, above all else, a mediator, after all, for Freire,

"The real communication does not seem to lie in the exclusive transfer or transmission of knowledge from one subject to another, but in their partaking in the act of understanding the significance of the meaning. This is a communication that is carried out critically" (p.70)

Whatever the path that is taken, none can dismiss the person of the teacher, after all, the means that exist today are the teachers' collaborators, and they are ways of facilitating teaching and learning. One cannot overlook that the learning environment is undergoing a reconfiguration and this requires the attention from those involved in this process and the willingness to acquire new skills.

Systematic observations of the forms of acquisition, retention and transfer of student learning should be a basic premise of a proposal aimed at "monitoring" teaching conditions. The focus on the organization of experiences in a learning environment should always guide the planning in a teaching situation. Interaction is crucial. Being able to rely on others is essential. Learning means being placed before a challenge and understanding the rules.

According to Costa Lins (2002) *"when we are born, we do not know how to do this or that, but we are able to do it later on because we learn the way things are done. And when we finally demonstrate our new ability, we are changing our nature"* (p. 09).

Still on the learning process, the author asserts that *"learning transforms human beings and steers them away from their original nature, enriching them with new skills and providing them with abilities not yet acquired until then, to solve the problems they will face in their lives"* (p,10)

Learning is therefore a specific, identifiable acquisition, with the necessary features to be a permanent part of one's set of capabilities. Learning today means being alert to changes in the environment, because there are conditions to the validity of learning, *"a learning process is not, in itself, legitimate or illegitimate, the legitimization of a learning process is granted by the purpose that the individual attaches to that learning, by whatever means used and by the respect to an essential ethical philosophy"* (COSTA LINS, 2002, p.17). In a teaching-learning environment, it is necessary to establish, from the outset, the critical need for the use and the understanding of the potential of current technologies and the first step should be to acknowledge the fact that technology is increasingly conducting our emotional and professional lives.

With all the information and communication technology we currently have, we are able to witness that everything happens almost instantly. Technology updates and

software versions change frequently. The amount of information is growing at an alarming rate. Society must be prepared to absorb and filter this much information, received on a daily basis.

New information technologies are not just tools to be applied, but processes to be developed. The role of the teacher/educator as a member of society, opinion leader, should be updated and he/she should constantly participate in these innovations.

We understand that contemporary society and its way of educating requires that one be in tune with the speed of change in the environment we live in.

The difficulties faced by teachers in classrooms where there is a resistance to adopting new technologies are increasingly visible, and this is mainly due to outdated and cast-in curricula of most teacher-training courses in Brazil (sic). There is always room for discussion with the faculty when it comes to improvement and innovation of the methodologies applied to teaching and learning. In this scenario, there is a proliferation of alternative intervention measures for educational practices in non-formal teaching-learning environments held by non-governmental partners. These initiatives propose the rescuing of the individual's building blocks, in this case early childhood education and literacy programs, through proposals that are characterized by the extension of the conventional classroom period in the public school system across the country.

The Active Community Library and Digital Literacy Partnership - Jardim São Pedro

Given this scenario, the Digital Literacy Project - which is currently held at the Community Library in Jardim São Pedro, in Limeira, São Paulo, Brazil - brings on the transformations triggered by the advent of Information and Communication Technology as a starting point for the transformation of education.

The Digital Literacy Project reported here, as well as other initiatives of similar nature that exist in Brazil, was created with the purpose of offering children from low-income families, residing in the outskirts of the city, the ability to access knowledge through initial computer literacy and reading and writing classes. In the first module, children do not have internet access, but they do have access to the fundamentals of computer science. From that point on, a seed is planted with the notion that the computer is not an end but a means for accessing and improving knowledge, and reading and writing go hand in hand with the digital world.

Thus, the classes take place alongside the reading and writing activities, respecting the space and context in which the activity takes place, i.e. within the library that survives on volunteer work. Children who participate in the project go through a list of reading material about children's themes: from filling out the reading form to the production of playful material based on what was learned through the book. The first reading is registered manually and the others are done on the computer.

Other resources that are used: audiovisual stories with characters that also exist in games (very few examples of this type of product are available in the Brazilian market); paints, crayons, play dough, etc, recreational and low cost materials.

The **Digital Literacy** Project, in the way it is currently run, was especially designed for children attending the Active Community Library, which focuses on reading as a vector for transforming social reality. In one year, it has turned the space into a diffuser of culture, art and professional training for income generation for the local community (through partnerships), spreading the idea that the space was created thinking about the community, which calls for government initiatives.

The **Digital Literacy** Project is a work proposition in progress, aiming at granting access to the computer as a means of expanding knowledge and skill acquisition for children aged six to ten years old, both male and female, who are residents of Jardim São Pedro. This pilot proposal is structured in one module, lasting four months or a total of

thirty hours, once a week, with a schedule of one hour per class for learning with the tool (computer) and a thirty-minute class for the reading/writing workshop with the final text on Health Care. The health topics are determined according to age-range, considering the most commonly emerging themes in the families of children who attend the classes.

The computers were donated and the module is composed of ten students per class using two students per machine. The operations of the Digital Literacy Project in the Active Community Library are run by volunteers, one professional volunteer in communication and education, two expert professionals in digital media and one Health professional. The orientation and scientific-pedagogical didactic guidelines are subsidized by the scope of the research groups of CNPQ:Pedagogic Cybernetics/Digital Languages Laboratory ECA-USP. Supervision is conducted by the managing team at the Active Community Library - Jardim São Pedro, who select the students and coordinate the book loans. At the end of the module, children are expected to produce a book/booklet on health care and they are introduced to the digital world, the concepts and applications, and encouraged to read and write with the help of the computer. The aim is also to promote access to technology, as yet another way to pursue knowledge, demonstrate that the computer is a working tool for the future and that its role is primarily a means to access knowledge, and also to evaluate the extent to which computers and other digital technologies (cameras) used as means, allow the child who is learning to read and write, produce and expand knowledge while learning to read and register the world through different resources. Activities include the use of photography and videos, through which the children are registering their activities lesson by lesson, with low cost digital cameras. It is currently noted the demand for longer periods of activity from the children. The frequency is expressive and absences are justified by the commuting difficulties from the relatives who accompany the children to the classes. During the activities, it is possible to observe the respect with classmates and the desire to be in their company.

From the very the beginning of the activities, it was also possible to detect significant learning problems due to the formal literacy process not meeting the basic monitoring requirements. Although this is not the subject of this project, is impossible not to notice it. It is hoped that this type of non-formal teaching-learning initiatives will, to some extent, serve as an observatory for such matters and that these are referred for a more thorough diagnosis of the real situation of teaching in elementary education for the public school system in the city (and around the country). The Digital Literacy Project has achieved its initial goals so far, and is now open to the possibility of being implemented in other similar spaces. However, this is another challenge!

Final Considerations

The challenges that lie before these changes are much greater compared to the benefits they currently offer. After all, this new "model" of teaching-learning environment triggered by the new technologies demands the restructuring of the information processing capacity from each of us, in other words, we are faced with the challenge of learning to learn, recombining information and (de)constructing a new school for a new education. Elementary education in Brazil is far from reaching levels of excellence. It works around low levels of performance, the children evaluated in government assessment procedures present levels of language, reading comprehension and math knowledge considered very poor compared to world averages. The budget for elementary education is now considered satisfactory, but there is a lack of administration and resource management available and it includes resources for teachers, who by now should already master a minimum of technological resources in order to promote the access of children into the world. According to this criterion, Brazil is not doing well at all.

References

CASTELLS, Manuel (2003). *A Galáxia da Internet: reflexões sobre internet, os negócios e a sociedade*. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editores.

_____. (1999). *A Sociedade em rede*. São Paulo: Paz e Terra.

COSTA LINS, M. J. S. (2002). Aprendizagem; IN: SENAC-DN-Curso de Especialização em EAD/Pos graduação Lato Sensu. R.J./CD 3: aprendizagem e tutoria, pp33-35.

EGAN, Kieran. (2002) *A Mente Educada: os males da educação e a ineficiência educacional nas escolas*. Trad. Eduardo Francisco Alves. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil.

FREIRE, Paulo. (2002). *Extensão ou Comunicação*. 12.ed. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, p.69.

KUHN, Thomas S. (1996) *A Estrutura das Revoluções Científicas*. 4ª ed. São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva.

LEVY, Pierre. (2000). *A Inteligência Coletiva*. São Paulo: Editora 34.

_____. (1999) *Cibercultura*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora 34.

_____. (1996) *O que é o Virtual?*. São Paulo, editora 34.

LIMA, Lauro de Oliveira. (1975). *Mutações em educação segundo M Luhan*. 8. ed., Petrópolis: Vozes.

MORIN, Edgar. (2000) *O Paradigma Perdido: a natureza humana*. Trad. Hermano Neves, 6ª ed. Portugal: Biblioteca Universitária, 2000.

_____. (2002) *Os Sete Saberes necessários à Educação do Futuro*. Trad. Catarina Eleonora F. da Silva e Jeanne Sawaia . 5ª ed. São Paulo: Cortez Editora/ UNESCO 2002.

SENAC(2006) - Serviço Nacional do Comércio. Educação a Distância/EBOOK