Showing the way to integration of digital technologies into education: Québec’s Reference Framework of Cross-curricular Digital Competencies

In September 2018, Google celebrated its 20th birthday, and in January 2019, Wikipedia reached the age of majority (18 years). For two decades, and together with Facebook (2004), YouTube (2006), Twitter (2006), and Instagram (2010), these tech giants have been altering the course of humankind. Who can foretell where all this will end? We have been swept up in a whirlwind, a vortex of evolving digital technologies that are reshaping societies economically, socially, and culturally. And this momentous upheaval has not spared education systems, from pre-kindergarten to university. In an increasingly digitized world where youth are completely captivated by screens and apps, teachers have no choice but to buy into digitally assisted pedagogy. Importantly, this will help students develop the diverse dimensions of the digital competencies they will need to get by. However, as a cautionary note, a slapdash, seat-of-the-pants approach to digital integration may result in disappointing outcomes (see Tondeur et al., 2016), as evidenced by the many empirical studies of unsuccessful attempts (Zheng et al., 2016). Furthermore, the ways that educators use digital technologies tend to have conspicuous effects on student motivation and engagement (Cudney et al., 2017), whereas the effects on learning may be less immediately apparent (Chauhan, 2017).

Bugmann of this paradox, our research team (Karsenti, 2019; Karsenti et Poellhuber, 2017; Karsenti & Mindful Bugmann, 2017) conducted an extensive research synthesis to explore and compile the dimensions of digital competencies in education. Twelve main dimensions were identified, largely surpassing the numbers included in traditional definitions of digital literacy. The synthesis findings have been incorporated into the Reference Framework for Digital
Competencies in Education, a component of the Digital Action Plan promoted by the Government of Québec (Canada). In this paper, we highlight a core dimension that featured prominently in our synthesis results: acting as an ethical citizen in the digital age. Accordingly, we call for both teachers and learners to act ethically and responsibly, while considering the social, cultural, and philosophical diversity of all participants in the digital society as well as the social, economic, environmental, and professional contexts in which the digital interactions take place. As an adjunct, learners must develop a capacity for critical thinking. The eleven other dimensions of digital competencies are presented in turn.

As the 21st century ripens and unfolds, it becomes impossible to ignore the new opportunities and modes of living that digital technologies make possible. We describe a diversity of ways that digital technologies can be integrated into education, along with the attendant competencies and skills required for students, from preschoolers to lifelong learners. In this sense, the Reference Framework for Digital Competencies serves as a beacon to light the way to a more successful integration of digital technologies into education.

Note


References


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