

Chapter 10

From Digital Distraction to Digital Motivation: Utopia or Reality

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ABSTRACT

The presence of technology on college campuses has increased rapidly in recent years. Students come to the classroom with a variety of technological devices including smart phones, tablets, or laptops and use them during academic activity. For this reason, there are many researchers who, in recent times, have been interested in the problems derived from digital distraction in higher education. In many cases, researchers have conducted studies and surveys to obtain first-hand information from the protagonists, that is, from university professors and students. Despite the efforts, there are many questions that still remain unanswered. The authors are aware of the enormous challenge that the use of technology poses in the university classrooms and want to delve into the causes and consequences of student digital distraction and the strategies that can be used by instructors to curb student digital distraction without deteriorating student-instructor rapport in the context of higher education.

INTRODUCTION

Mobile phones, tablets and laptops have increasingly become commodity products and easily available. The presence of technology in university classrooms is inevitable, and it opens the door to the use of methodologies and the development of activities that would not be possible without its support. Students come to the classroom with their mobile phones (Derounian, 2020). And on many occasions, they also carry a tablet or laptop and use them during different academic activities, apparently, to be able to participate in these activities more appropriately (Castillo-Manzano et al., 2017; Derounian, 2020).

Today's children and teenagers are digital natives who have grown up in homes and schools where technological devices are common, and offer them access to many different contents. A lot of millennials have been educated in schools using applications such as Kahoot!, Educaplay or Classcraft. Authors like Bawa (2019), or Wang and Tahir (2020), have researched about how Kahoot! enhances learner performance and engagement levels, more than traditional teaching methods. Other researchers have focused on the potential of Educaplay to improve education (Charrupi et al., 2019). On the other side, Bonvin et al. (2017) tried to characterize the social component of players' engagement while using the role-playing game for classroom management Classcraft.

Professors and students are increasingly comfortable using technological devices to plan and carry out academic activities. Our education system has reached a point of no return when it comes to the use of technology. Eliminating technology from classrooms and dispossessing students of technological devices, with the excuse of digital distractions, would increase digital illiteracy among the new generations, putting them at the level of older generations. And it would also generate profound inequalities between those students who do have access to all kinds of technological devices outside the classroom, and those who do not. Technology must be present in classrooms, and educational institutions must make an effort to do so.

Moreover, for children and adolescents who have been educated in a technological environment and have discovered the possibilities that technology offers, it does not make any sense denying them the possibility of using technology on university campuses.

The authors are aware of the enormous challenge that the use of technology poses in the college classrooms and want to delve into the causes and consequences of student digital distraction, and the strategies that can be used by instructors to transform digital distraction into digital motivation, without deteriorating student-instructor rapport, in higher education.

First, the need for the use of technology in the classroom is addressed. Next, the presence of digital distraction in the classroom is analyzed. Subsequently, it is discussed whether anxiety and dependence generated by technology may be the reason why students use technology in the classroom for off-task purposes. Later, the myth of the digital native is reviewed. Next, the control of digital distractions is analyzed, including different techniques such as instructor-provided strategies or gamification. Afterwards, the use of technology as a motivating element is proposed: technology should be a motivator and not a distraction, with the help of gamification techniques. Finally, the main conclusions are presented.

NECESSITY OF DIGITAL USES IN THE CLASSROOM

In recent years, university campuses have been progressively filled with all kinds of technological devices. Houle et al. (2013) examined the reasons why students choose to take laptop computers into college

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