

Chapter 10

Digital Inclusion and Public Policies in Brazil

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ABSTRACT

This chapter intends to discuss the development of public policies and new participation mechanisms that concern digital inclusion and education in Brazil. Since 2000, several changes have been done in this area to better comprehend the digital era phenomenon and how it affects all the Brazilian people. This study presents comparison between the Brazilian regions, once the Southeast and the South are very engaged to the digital era, while the North, Northeast and Mid-West still face problems with access issues.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, in the second decade of the 21st century, with the increasing tendency of people to act more autonomously in relation to the use of ICT, it is inevitable not realize that this is because we are immersed in the era of collaboration of more democratized learning opportunities. There has been an increase of internet appropriation, for the sharing of information, knowledge, services that are gradually being distributed with greater ability, through social networks, workshops, free tutorials, photos and videos, and therefore constitute important conditions for free access of knowledge about everything and everyone. This type of collaboration is part of a intelligently distributed networking policy and this collective intelligence implies considerable benefits in all aspects of life, whether financial, cultural, social, public policy etc.

In regards to the indicators that can help us present the Brazilian Digital Inclusion [DI] scenario, this study is based on some of the most reputed national researches, such as national sample surveys: Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios - PNAD 2012 - of the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística – IBGE (2012), ICT Kids Online (2013b), ICT Education and ICT Households (2013a) of Brazilian Internet Steering Committee (CGI.br), which shows, for example, that more than half of the Brazilian households still do not own a computer and most of the populations have not even connected directly or indirectly to the Internet.

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These indicators show how this public policy still needs to progress to become an effective resource for Brazilian population participation. There is no doubt that computers are missing in Brazilian households. According to research, 54% do not have a computer and 90% of the populations who do not access the Internet inhabit rural areas.

Despite the economic aspect influencing the access to household technology, it is necessary that the Brazilian digital inclusion programs be firmly determined to achieve the desirable goal of promoting Internet connectivity throughout the country. Therefore, it is necessary to encourage the production of technical devices that facilitate connectivity and measures that provide a gradual and consistent learning in accordance with these tools that can promote participating social-educational activities.

According to Conference Declaration Multisectoral of São Paulo¹ (NETMundial, 2014), some of the important mechanisms of participation that modernize the Brazilian e-government is the Access to Information Law and Marco Civil Internet (Internet Civil Rights) are currently enacted and later described, are the result of a participatory design process of in deftly involved inclusion digital activists, empowering decision-making processes involving Internet users' rights.

Therefore, the role of digital inclusion today is vital in order to fully achieve internationally agreed upon sustainable development goals, however this will only be possible through a growing governmental and social investment multi-sectoral efforts to provide improvement support, whether it be infrastructure to access ICT, with equipment costs reduction, management training and programmers responsible for software architecture, e-gov sites and other services that promote information distribution efficiency and effective public participation on public policy.

The collaborative production and sharing information online, especially by the massive use of social networks has just been acting as the primary contact for media information exchange, presenting services and products in general, occurring mainly among younger generations (Ito et al, 2008) who began their apprenticeship technology in schools and in the ordinary use of mobile devices like smartphones and tablets. Digital Inclusion is quite significant at this time that the Brazil have been experiencing over the past 20 years, with a generation of internet users who already act as the great protagonists of public network participation.

Randal Pinkett's approach (2000) in articles published in MIT was about "digital inclusion" concept by the division between the rich and the information poor. This expression shows in deed the principles established by the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva in 2003. Pinkett presents other terms to refer to those who have access to information and those who don't have (digital haves e digital have-nots) creating a more procedural understanding from digital divide to digital opportunity.

Some years later, in 2005, Digital Divide Network, a project of the Benton Foundation, states that digital inclusion refers to the gap between those who can effectively use ICT, such as the Internet, and those who cannot. (Guzzi, 2010)

Despite these and several subsequent attempts to define Digital Inclusion, over the last two decades, it is no longer possible to refer to such programs as mere access to the Internet. But it is important to note that today, even this mere access is not so simple, especially in a developing country like Brazil. Brazil has many infrastructure problems to be solved, be it for purchase of equipment, either in relation to connectivity, whether in building service stations, either in maintenance capacity or human resources.

Over the course of the past 20 years, the projects, researches and actions are based on the idea that the Internet access and the information on the net are the citizens' rights. This is an international orientation of democratization in Declaration of Human Rights from the United Nations Information Society.

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