

Chapter 14

Framework for the Experiences in Digital Literacy in the Spanish Market

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ABSTRACT

The information society must be considered, above all, a society composed by people. For that reason, a social priority for the information society development should be centered in the acquisition of knowledge. To be included in the digital literacy means to have the technological capabilities that allow a person surviving in the information society. We try to offer real examples for the development of digital literacy in a variety of areas of application: education, social inclusion and firms. For that reason we describe and analyze the contribution of digital literacy to the following Spanish projects: Educared, which promotes the spread of Internet for innovation and pedagogical training amongst teachers, parents and students in primary and secondary schools; the Dana Project, which identifies good practices to reduce the digital gap based in gender; and Competic, a program offers good practices for the promotion of information and communication technologies in small and medium size firms.

INTRODUCTION

Digital literacy can be defined as “the capacity to understand and use sources of information when they are offered by a computer” (Gilster, 1997). Gutierrez Martin (2003) explains that digital literacy has more to do with the domain of ideas than with computers itself. The literacy must be considered as the ability for surviving that im-

proves the quality of life of everyone, no matter sex, race, religion and origin (Gilster, 1997).

Information and communication networks (ICN) promote a more interactive civil society and this also creates new models of inequalities or divisions in the way we communicate each other (Frederick, 1993). Although the access to the information is today more universal, we can find more sophisticated systems that prohibit some accesses (Tascón, 2006). We can still find main barriers for the access to Internet: technological infrastructure,

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Internet segmentation, etc., but the most important one is the lack of education. So the creation of digital literacy policies is crucial to create a more democratic society. The information society is composed by people, so the emphasis must be put on them. The information society in different countries must promote social integration and make of people active and critic users of information and communication networks. We must build a culture centered in the relationships between users. In our society users must be the information builders apart from consumers (Casacuberta, 2003).

In this paper we try to offer real examples of digital literacy in a variety of areas of application: education, social inclusion, and firms. For that reason we describe the contribution of digital literacy to the following Spanish projects, Educared, a program for promoting digital literacy in education, the Dana Project, a program for promoting a decrease in the digital divide based in genres, Competic, it is a Program that tries to offer good practices for the promotion of information and communication technologies for small and medium size firms. We have chosen two different industries that have been a priority for the development of the Spanish Information Society from the end of the nineties, education and small and medium size firms.

THE EFFECTS OF DIGITAL LITERACY IN THE SOCIETY

Literacy in a wide sense is a basic principle of any educational system. Today, the most important areas to perform literacy are the family, the school and the communication media. Digital literacy is just a part of the general literacy. As long as training actions are taking place for the development of literacy, they should also be considered for digital literacy. In this sense we define digital literacy as a group of training actions driven to the development of technical, social and ethical abilities related to the use of information and communication technologies, organized by

Institutions, Associations, NGOs, and so forth (Travieso & Planella, 2008, p. 3).

The digital literacy requires of a degree of organization and systematization that is assumed by the educational Institutions, specially the school. However it should be also provided in an informal way by the family and by the communication media. As we have mentioned before, it is just a part of the general literacy in its multiple aspects.

Digital literacy must not only be provided by technologists since literacy is not only provided by linguistics, writers or book editors. In this sense, two kind of basic actions should be provided,

- Teachers working on the compulsory education in the first years of life should be trained in the possibilities and use of information and communication technologies
- Older persons should be permanently trained in information and communication technologies.

The Public Administrations are promoting the use of electronic services for improving their daily relationships with citizens and firms. In this sense they are offering a great opportunity for citizens to increase their computer abilities. The local portals are becoming each time more a key source of information.

Electronic government apart from using ICT services for improving citizen relationships, should position customers in the heart of all we do and build the access to services (Kavan et al., 1999; Evangelidis, 2005).

Some of the initial studies in digital literacy have been focused in e-governance (Marche and McNiven, 2003), critical success factors (Siau & Long, 2004; Ke & Wei, 2004) and Balanced Scorecard (Gueorguiev et al., 2005). Although there might be many factors of risk affecting the projects (Evangelidis, 2005), there are lots of benefits derived from the initiatives of electronic governance by including an increase in the efficiency of manual tasks, fast online responses and increases in organizational competitiveness

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