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INFORMATION SOCIETY AND DIGITAL LEADERSHIP IN THE GLOBALIZED EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: POLITICAL APPROACH

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Abstract

The article dwells on the changes that the information society has brought to all spheres of human life, education being one of them. A huge gap has appeared between the countries which produce and circulate knowledge, thus defining the dominant trends in different fields of science and technology, and economically less developed countries. At present, the notion of poverty acquires new meanings, since it is defined not only by the material conditions in which people live, but also by the existing opportunities to get access to new cultural and social meanings, to actively participate in new social practices. ICT can give people of different countries more possibilities to obtain key information necessary for understanding the dynamics of developments in different spheres of globalized and digital reality. E-leadership skills help make the best use of digital technologies within any type of organization and introduce digital innovations in both the public and private sectors. The article addresses the problem of the educational system response to the new scenarios against the background of the changes that new technologies dictate. The educational system leadership should consider the fact that today's teachers should be capable of making agreeable use of digital tools and be willing to introduce them into their classes on a daily basis. These skills and abilities have become even more relevant during the pandemic of COVID 19. Apart from theoretical insights, the article presents the results of a small-scale empirical research on the attitude to digitalization of educational leadership in Kazakhstan.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, we are facing a new environment that is influenced by the third industrial revolution; new technologies transforming society in a dynamic way lead to new policies. Society has been changing since the end of the last century; new environmental conditions for individuals and groups appear being caused by scientific and technical progress and the process of globalization. If we take into consideration social practice, there is essential dynamics of change in the construction of the identities, as well as the projects promoted by different social actors according to their capacities and interests. The technological revolution is therefore a highly influential element for understanding modernity, as it creates new forms of socialization, individual and collective identity. Globalization can be seen as a multidimensional process, characterized by the transformation of the production system, the organizational system, the cultural system, and the institutional system, and based on a technological revolution that is not the cause but the indispensable means of this transformation (Figus, 2020; Quaglino & Ghislieri, 2004).

New scenarios in which science and technology become the central axes to achieve development and improvement in this globalized world, promote the conversion of ways of producing, circulating, selecting, and using knowledge. As a result, the traditional way in which we relate to information and knowledge is reconfigured. Education acquires utmost importance in a society where knowledge becomes a source of wealth. At the end of the last century, the complexity and speed of the changes in the world system brought spectacular progress to many countries of the world; however, at the same time, they caused significant setbacks in development of many other countries, for example, in Africa. A huge gap has appeared between those countries which produce and circulate knowledge and therefore mark the dominant development trends in different fields of science and technology and economically less developed countries (Quaglino & Ghislieri, 2004). In this sense it is important to recognize that globalization has aggravated social and economic inequalities among different social groups. At present, the notion of poverty acquires new meanings, since it is defined not only by the material conditions in which people live, but also by the existing opportunities to get access to new cultural and social meanings and to actively participate in new social practices.

At present, knowledge has become the subject of work and production in a globalized society, in which the educational systems create globalized knowledge. If to approach knowledge from the political point of view, we would stress that the phenomenon of democratization is linked to the democratic character of both production and distribution of knowledge. Knowledge is infinitely expandable, and the problem is whether ICT can actually give people of different countries more possibilities to obtain key information necessary for understanding the dynamics of developments in different fields of action that make up new globalized and digital reality. The matter concerns the complex social consequences that these models of social and economic organizations based on knowledge have brought with them, involving transformations in the practices of leadership expanding de facto the public space of knowledge with multiple effects (Goleman et al., 2017). Nowadays, the smart phone in your hand means the opportunity to reach a level of digitization that allows aspiring to leadership. Knowledge is decentralized from elite leadership to mass players (Quaglino & Ghislieri, 2004). Digitalization becomes a key to mass empowerment, and it must be considered from the education point of view. Evidently, there is the urgent

need to create more opportunities for new generations through new educational methods and new training systems; however, it is worth discussing the extent of promoting some conceptions of reality developed by industrialized countries to developing countries while transferring information through the educational system.

2. Problem Statement

The given research addresses the problem of the educational system response to the new scenarios against the background of the changes that new technologies dictate day by day. The access to information influences the system of thinking; it leads to a radical change in leadership whose knowledge becomes a flexible, fluid, constantly expanding, and moving resource (Quaglino & Ghislieri, 2004). E-leadership skills are regarded as the ability to make the best use of digital technologies within any type of organization and to introduce digital innovations in both the public and private sectors. The inclusion of ICT within educational environments is having a great impact not only on educational content, curriculum changes, teacher training, and development of new educational tools and methods, but, above all, on the construction of new decision-making processes that shape the skills required to become a new leader in education field (Tracy, 2018a, 2018c). These new skills have changed the figure of leaders (Maxwell, 2018), now defined as “e-leaders” able to use the acquired digital skills to cope with the overall management of the school and the University (Pasini & Perego, 2014; Tracy, 2018b). Research that tries to give certainties on the theme of leadership in the information society, and more precisely, on educational leadership, on the pedagogical and didactic aspects of educational choices, the administrative and communicative aspects, the resolution and enhancement of human resources, the aspects of internationalization and the consideration of globalization as an added value has not yet led to shared answers (Barzano, 2008; Goleman, 2019; Goleman et al., 2017). However, the concept of new leadership in the educational system underlines that today’s teachers should be capable of making satisfactory use of digital tools, of interpreting the new needs of society in an increasingly complex and globalized educational system (Hesselbein et al., 1996; Morin, 1985). Another crucial aspect is the willingness of teachers to introduce ICT into their classes on a daily basis (Bolman & Gallos, 2011) and to embrace a global horizon of complex contemporary society (Nuove Tecnologie, 2020). There is a widespread need for the restructuring of teacher training; subject knowledge acquisition should go hand in hand with getting knowledge of the latest technological resources and digital competence development. It is essential condition for the educational system of any country. Nowadays, technology acquires even greater importance in the face of the obvious consequences of the global challenges, one of the latest being the COVID19 pandemic that has actually upset the political and economic balance and brought significant problems to the field of education (Figus, 2020; Ulrich, 2015).

3. Research Questions

The research addresses the following questions:

- In what way do the processes of globalization and digitalization influence the world educational system?
- What challenges does the educational system face nowadays?
- What is the attitude of educational leadership of Kazakhstan to digitalization?

4. Purpose of the Study

Main purpose of this article is to analyze the leading role of teachers in the development of a digital culture in globalized world. The research is to advance theoretically the debate about digitalization and leadership and their relationships, to identify key perspectives and opportunities. It is necessary to look at the way teachers are getting ready to become new leaders, to understand and to make the best use of constantly evolving digital systems, and how the educational system as a whole is getting ready for the challenges that will appear in the years to come.

5. Research Methods

To answer the research questions, the relevant research literature selection and analysis were performed in order to single out and analyse the postulates linked to knowledge, information and leadership in a globalized world. To support the research study, the analysis of the latest sources on teacher training was carried out. To conduct a small scale empirical research, a comprehensive survey in the form of a questionnaire was developed. Even if limited to the Kazakhstan reality, it allows reflecting on the ICT skills and abilities of teachers who are active in their teaching work in the era of digitalization.

6. Findings

The growing technological capacity and competitiveness of enterprises in the new global economy coexist with financial instability, social exclusion of a large part of the population, the accelerated deterioration of the environment and the growing distance between state institutions and the experience of society in general (Sansavini, 2020). New technologies and new forms of poverty and social exclusion expand with the same speed. The dynamics calls for meaningful interaction between local culture and universal culture, shaping new leaders and consequently new pedagogical systems which should take into account the change of society, globalization, digitalization, and the explosion of knowledge which hopefully will result in strengthening the social ties and not in a further separation of rich and poor. The radical revolution of thought modifies the way of transmitting knowledge and creativity. Nowadays people who wish to obtain new skills do it quickly and not necessarily resort to the help of universities and other educational institutions. Information travels on the Internet, the Internet is globalized, therefore, the educational system cannot avoid evolution and cannot help but adapt to the new requirements. Educational system depends more and more strongly on the production and circulation of scientific knowledge built on realities and models of society and on the ability and willingness of the

leadership to provide the basis for the transfer of information to all. Knowledge that does not become a commodity is passively consumed, without a reflection on its historical content and on the possible effects of its application in culturally different realities. Here, indeed, lies the difference between the transfer of knowledge and the instrumentalization of information due to globalization and its tools in the digital epoch.

Modern leadership must have a learning approach in which communication must work to disseminate knowledge, so new types of interactive, personalized, collaborative, creative and innovative learning are necessary to keep people involved in a globalized society. Indeed, since the early 2000s, the Council of Europe has promoted the creation of strong and effective leadership to achieve growth, competitiveness and social cohesion in a knowledge society (Presidency Conclusions. Lisbon European Council, 2000). The educational systems, both at schools and in universities, need to turn into a place not only for education, but also for cooperation, participation, comparison, exchange, cooperation, and sharing. We are therefore looking at a leadership that is committed to “spreading education”, focused on the direct involvement of all the actors operating in the educational system as a whole and in the sphere of higher education in particular with different ways of participation and assumption of responsibilities. In this context we look forward to see the emerging “e-leadership” characterized with the ability to make the best use of digital technologies within any type of organization and to introduce digital innovations in both the public and private sectors. If we consider digitalization and its relationship with educational leadership, “e-leaders” are able to use the acquired digital skills to cope with the overall management of the school and the university, i.e. with the pedagogical and didactic aspects of educational choices, the administrative and communicative issues, with the empowerment of human resources, the internationalization of educational environment and the consideration of globalization as an added value (Barzano, 2008; Pasini, 2016; Pasini & Perego, 2014).

An indispensable condition for the contemporary school would be to constitute itself as a space of opportunity, where people are educated with criteria, content, and a reflective attitude allowing them to select and transform the information that flows through computer networks and turns into knowledge with meaning and future projection for a real condition. Ultimately, we need to define information and knowledge society and the way it points the path to the future educational system, starting from needs different from traditional ones, clearly linked to the development of the ability to comprehensively learn throughout the whole human life. In other words, the problem is no longer the amount of information that children and young people receive. It is in a measure of quality: the ability to understand information, process it, select it, organize it, and transform it into knowledge. The technological context becomes the background against which we have to ask ourselves how we can distribute the information and how globally this can be done in a balanced, gradual but above all fair way, without neglecting anyone.

Nowadays, the educational system faces two great and closely related challenges in the global and computerized world. On the one hand, it is necessary to consolidate a global educational system allowing the maximum development of each person’s skills, respecting diversity and ensuring equal access to education and compensating for inequalities; on the other hand, there is a need to ensure the education of independent personalities, able to make informed decisions about their own lives and to participate in a relatively autonomous way in professional and social life. The leadership should be willing to proceed in

this direction, not closing itself in the selfish preservation of knowledge and management of technology. In this case the more developed countries are advantaged by having a greater awareness and decision-making capacity on the possibilities, also due to a wider access to different sources of information and spaces for interaction, recognizing that communication is the most decisive factor in the educating of those who grow up with the computer networks at hand. Teachers could become the true facilitators of this process. Despite the fact that only they are aware of the level of competence they have and what skills they need to develop, teachers should be guided towards the development of their personal initiative and critical thinking.

To reflect on the attitudes to digitalization, we developed a comprehensive survey in the form of a questionnaire and conducted the survey in several Kazakhstan universities. It allowed us to obtain results and to draw some conclusions on the relevant research questions. One of the survey questions was on the connection between leadership and the digitalization processes. For 85.4% of respondents, the digitalization process is essential for maintaining leadership. The respondents recognize that nowadays it is necessary for leaders to adapt to globalization and local strategies, especially in the educational sector. The educational leadership must direct its efforts towards digital literacy. This positive response is explained by the fact that digitalization is the focus point of government program “Digital Kazakhstan”. This program is aimed at improving the living standards of each country’s resident, using digital technologies. The program implementation has been currently going on in the period of 2018-2022 in five key directions. One of these directions is evolution of the human capital assets involving transformational changes, comprising creative society formation and transition to the new realities – knowledge-based economy (Programma “Cifrovoi Kazahstan”, 2018). The respondents recognize that information and communication technologies have become an important strategy to increase competitiveness, growth, and equity of the educational process participants. The educational system of Kazakhstan must be equipped for new changes to share and confront the tensions that these new social scenarios bring with them.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that the new globalized society and digitalization processes are modifying and influencing the leadership model in a context of new challenges for society. It is evident that the benefits of the extended technology platform must be extrapolated for human development, defining the information accessed so that it acquires meaning in its reality by exalting this act of knowledge beyond geographical and cultural boundaries, globalizing the process and exalting participation in knowledge. Information society bases its action on certain concepts characteristic of the knowledge economy. Education would therefore be at the service of a model of growth that must orient itself and promote the development of even the most developed countries. World education, albeit with differences from continent to continent and from country to country, is encountering strong contrasts and challenges. The globalization of education lead to consolidating education and erasing the differences. At the same time, educational policies must address the problems of equity and quality. Educational leaders must promote a more inclusive education, ensuring equal access to education and compensating for inequalities. Current demands are more oriented towards the notion of a knowledge or learning society,

which promote a more inclusive foundation that requires moving towards communicative dimension of knowledge. In this sense, leaders must build new paths of knowledge transfer, and cannot delegate the computer networks, which is no substitute for the educational system, the role of educating the new generations. The leadership should be willing to proceed in this direction, not closing itself in the selfish preservation of knowledge and management of technology.

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