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Identity and ICT: The influence of Rationality, Market Society and ICT in the classroom

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Abstract

The integration of ICT in the school classroom raises new perspectives in the sociological theory of education that consists of a framework to explain the resilience of the power structure as well as the subjects' role in participating in the educational process.

More specifically, this presentation considers two basic questions of the Sociology of Education: the process of reproduction as well as the possibility for change. Educational change concerns structure on the one hand; the role of the subjects in a relation of interdependence on the other hand.

The introduction and integration of ICT and the new technocratic reason in the school classroom which modifies the educational process, is one of the challenges that we are called upon not only to comprehend but also analyze in order to produce effective educational practices.

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Introduction

The introduction and integration of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) in the school classroom has created a new form of educational inequalities. The study of the digital divide as a social and educational phenomenon constitutes a new theoretical and research framework for the sociology of education.

Thus, western societies draw particular attention to the analysis of the import and the integration of the ICT as a particular process that shapes social relations and social structure globally since it concerns the macro and micro level of analysis. Social science increasingly and intensively is turning to the study of accessing capabilities, emerging digital infrastructure, acquiring dexterities in using digital machines, and the symbolic production of knowledge. Economic, social and political cohesion in the European space is directly connected with the results of the above studies.

This presentation considers two basic questions of the New Sociology of Education: the process of reproduction as well as the possibility for change. Educational change concerns structure on the one hand and the role of the subjects in a relation of interdependence on the other hand (Ball 2004). More specifically, the integration of ICT in the school classroom raises new perspectives in the sociological theory of education that consists of a framework to explain the resilience of the power structure as well as the subjects' role in participating in the educational process (Lamnias & Kamarianos 2000).

The introduction and integration of ICT and the new technocratic reason in the school classroom which modifies the educational process, is one of the challenges that we are called upon not only to comprehend but also analyze in order to produce effective educational practices.

More specifically, in the first part of this paper we attempt to present concisely through the thoughts of intellectuals such as Habermas, Wise (1997), Agamben (1995, 2005), and Virilio (1998, 2005), the significance of the essence and the assimilation of the New Technologies in the creation of the social structure of modern western societies. The incorporation of ICT in the economic aspects of globalisation is particularly important. Remarkable also are the repercussions of the import and assimilation of ICT in education. Thus, in this first part we conclude that it is particularly interesting to comprehend the ways of the subjects' action in the particular process of educational changes.

In the second half of this paper we attempt to critically present an argument of change of educational practices as a consequence of using ICT in education. We argue that the educational processes constitute processes of daily life and consequently can be also considered as processes of interaction among the social subjects who use the digital machine and therefore it is particularly important to be analyzed under the prism of interaction ritual theory (Collins 1988, 1990).

Rationality, Market Society and ICT

It is not the first time that western societies particularly Europeans discuss the importance of new technologies. In the beginning of the 20th century social subjects were particularly impressed by technological breakthrough (Benson and Loyd 1983). Eminent intellectuals such as Emile Durkheim and Max Weber integrated the analysis of rationalism as a crucial part of their theoretical structure, while their work was inspired mainly up to the First World War by the optimism of this important new reason in the configuration of European societies (Alexander 1995, Dodd 1999, Stedman 2001).

When considering western modernity and ICT, the instrumental rationale must be reconceptualized. ICT, through the instrumental redefinition of modern organisational reasons and technocratic practices, outlines both the existing socio-economic structure and social change. The above observation is particularly obvious in the case of the sphere of economy at the world level.

The market society attempted and accomplished the integration of new technologies and the development of a technocratic rationale. The definition of the new economic rationalism is dictated by the goals of effectiveness and efficiency. The integration of the ICT in the field of economics through processes such as e-commerce or e-banking are indicative of the way that the economic, social and political sectors of modern western societies stem from the use of concrete codes of symbolic interaction. The prospect of the digital tool mediating in the manufacture and change of the economic and the social space constitutes the starting point of articulations of power and control. This possibility precisely in direct connection with the spirit of productivity and effectiveness produces a sovereign way of everyday life (Goldsmith and Wu 2006, Agamben 1995, 2005).

The new and necessary economic dexterities have increased the demands of the market society on education. These requirements are particularly articulated in the individual fields, such as economic and political and it is sensible to increase the intensity in the relationships of economy, society, technology and education.

As the new economy is one of knowledge, education constitutes a strategic institution for the economies of knowledge. The repercussions on the economic field are proportional with those to the changes in the school system. The possibilities of production and transmission of knowledge vary qualitatively and quantitatively.

In its connection with the social and economic areas, education and daily educational practice are directly connected with the market and the society of citizens as education is integrated in the whole social regulation (Castells 1996). Thus, the school is found directly in the path of the winds of change. The digitalisation of educational process, according to the analyses of thinkers such as Virilio, Habermas, Wise, create a new legitimate frame with techno-educational characteristics (David 1994, Lamnias & Kamarianos 2000a, 2000b).

The successful form of educational adaptations and uses of the new reason that are produced in the form of techno-pedagogic regulation will determine both the macro-level and micro-level of the social subjects' needs.

Consequently, we consider that educational operation is a strategic process, which determines the future uses of ICT and provides certain significance to their content and also will determine the potential variations of the subjects' sociability, wherein young people will be motivated and actualized as social subjects (Steinbock 2005).

Thus, consumption, playing, learning, politics and even interpersonal relations are disrupted by the use or the wish of use of the digital tool. It is obvious that these processes convert the tool itself and the reason that it brings, as a sovereign objective of a reproduction process (Goldsmith & Wu 2006).

It is consequently particularly interesting to understand the way in which social subjects participate either individually or collectively, both in the production of structural meanings and in the process of social change. Therefore, we will attempt to approach the manner in which the subjects comprehend and use not only the tool but the combination of symbol and tool and the final production of the technological code.

Changing frameworks and the role of the ICT

The import and use of the new digital tool in economy, society and particularly the school cannot but concurrently also mean the adoption of this "internal nature" by the educational process. It follows that understanding the importance of the incorporation of the New Technologies both in the terms of structure of the social subject is indicative of the importance of the New Technologies in the operation of the educational system and the school classroom.

On the whole the quantitative and qualitative development of the increased importance of digital machine use for communication, consumption, amusement and briefing has rendered it a machine of symbolic expression, as well as a medium of perceiving social phenomena and relations (Wise 1997; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Lamnias & Kamarianos 2000a, 2000b).

Bearing this criterion in mind initially codes and criteria of symbolic interaction are articulated in the framework of which configuration of the social subjects is related with the comprehension and employment of these codes. Satisfaction of human contacts more and more requires the tools, the codes and the logic of digital technology (Kamarianos 1998)

The above processes as the ones of everyday use and concretely as processes of interaction between the social subjects using the digital machine are particularly important to be analyzed under the prism of interaction ritual theory (Collins 1988).

As the social subject uses the ICT, as we showed above, for communication, education or amusement experiences, according to Collins (1990) certain types of emotions, such as joy, fear, anger, sadness, as part of his/her everyday life. Most important however is that the person using the personal computer communicates with other social subjects with whom he/she experiences the feeling of 'belonging'. This observation refers us to the theoretical form of energy outlined by Collins (1990). According to Collins (1990) the sense of social connectedness experienced by the social subject for example, is a certain emotion which he defines as emotional energy. According to that theoretical framework in Stratification Emotional Energy and the Transient Emotions social subjects tend to maximize their level of emotional energy (Collins 1990).

Of course the sense of social connectedness is not the only feeling that

tends to maximize the subject's emotional energy. According to Collins (1990, 2000), the social subjects tend to increase the levels of emotional energy, seeking the feeling not only of enthusiasm, but also of personal power. Thus, the maximization of the subject's emotional energy, can be achieved either through his sense of social connectedness from solidarity experiences or through hierarchical interactions (Collins 2000:33 - 36). In our case where in we want to investigate the use of ICT in the creation of new social structures, we must consider if basic requirements like those that are fixed in Collins model are in effect.

In digital communication the condition of interpersonal contact is changed. Proportionally also the conditions of the shared emotion are differentiated, as well as the shared focus of attention condition. Specifically, the characteristics of personal contact of shared emotion and mutual awareness raise important aspects of digital structure that shift the analytic interest from the use of computer and digital communication as processes of individualization to the digital interaction as a process of the formation of social structures, as they lead the subject from isolation to the team. Consequently, the knowledge of digital techniques and uses today constitutes a nodal and critical part of the identity that the social subject is asked to acquire in order to be included both in the society of citizens and in the society of the market (Castells, 2003).

In this process the use of the tool, the comprehension of the content, and especially the adoption of the techno-pedagogic code, will determine the degree to which the student may be part of the common process of 'contagion' and generation of emotional energy. The knowledge of using the digital machine is a dexterity which the student is called upon to acquire. This dexterity is vital, as it will determine the terms of the subjects' participation in the team of production of educational reality, through the growth of long term feelings of solidarity with the group.

The personal computer constitutes the symbol and instrument of this solidarity interaction (Lamnias & Kamarianos 2000a, 2000b). In a continuous feedback the new model that is produced by the use of the digital tool places in the core of the educational process, not the teacher-authority or the student-researcher, but the process of production of solidarity and of the feeling of the subject that he/she belongs somewhere and that he/she is contributing critically to the production of energy that we call educational practice. Teacher and student are asked to search and discover the means of producing the necessary emotional dynamics, to collaborate in shaping a new dominating frame, in contrast to the classic approach of

power with the teacher as a knowledge transmission source through the culture of critical consciousness as a factor of change and improvement (Guile, 1998).

Conclusion

Regarding the educational change and concretely the role of social subjects, the incorporation of new technologies is proven equally important for the individual both in local societies and at the global level. Thus, interaction ritual theory can constitute one more theoretical tool for the interpretation of repercussions that the incorporation of new technologies in the education involves as a process of interaction. This hermeneutical framework shifts the focus from the use of the personal computer to the digital interaction as a process of formation of social structures that is important both for the market society and for the citizenship society.

Therefore it is a new theoretical approach of power distribution in the school classroom. Under this micro-theoretical approach the relation between teacher and pupil concerns not only the imposition of authority but also the production of the classroom dynamics.

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