Literacies and the (Re) Definition of Education in the XXI Century

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***Abstract*:** *Our main objective is to analyse the urgency of integration of Literacies in the education system as a strategy to enable students and teachers to face the changes in information, communication platforms, languages and cultures that characterize nowadays society. In the XXI century, we need a new pedagogical paradigm to (re)define Education and respond to all the new challenges that schools and universities face looking at the new horizons of knowledge, teaching and learning.*

Keywords: *Literacies, Education, Pedagogical Innovation*

1. Introduction

The society of the twenty-first century is deeply heterogeneous, increasingly demanding in the codification and decoding of messages due to its complex, multicultural nature, in a permanent technological vortex, with a clear discursive hybridism, with different media and interactive information platforms, information oceans for which it rarely has the time and tools to analyze, filter and assimilate. This new interrelated network of contexts deserved from Assunção Flores (2017, p.2) the following analysis:

> In fact, over the past two decades, schools, and hence teachers, have been confronted with increasingly complex demands and challenges, such as widening their responsibilities and roles (for example, in multicultural contexts in which they have to work, changes in the family structure and expansion of their functions that go beyond the scope of the classroom and its discipline), the growing influence of the media in the education of students, the coexistence of different educational models in a society multicultural education, increased opportunities for learning outside of school due to the development of information and communication technologies, growing bureaucracy, accountability and public scrutiny, among others (Harves, 2001; Esteves, 2000; , Flores, 2011, 2012a).

These inexorable dynamics reached the Higher Education, touching teachers and students. On the one hand, students increasingly possess digital skills, learning, building and disseminating information through mobile devices connected to the World Wide Web, used with increasing frequency and regularity, allowing learning without the time and without place marked. On the other hand, these technological innovations necessarily lead to new practices in education. The youngsters of this generation are digital natives (Prensky, 2001) and teachers must necessarily follow this technological vertigo and this new student, contrary to what is often still found in many institutions, that is, an integration of ICT in the classroom. In this regard, let us recall that UNESCO lists eight missions of higher education in the World Declaration on Higher Education in the twenty-first century, of which we highlight: "To educate and train highly qualified people, citizens and responsible citizens ... including professional training ... through courses that constantly adapt to the present and future needs of society"; "Providing opportunities for lifelong learning"; "Implement research in all disciplines, interdisciplinarity; "Creating new learning environments, ranging from distance education services to fully virtual institutions and higher education systems"; "Contribute to the protection and consolidation of the values of society (...) democratic citizenship, (...) critical and independent perspectives, humanistic perspectives"; "New pedagogical methods need to be associated with new evaluative methods". The European Commission stresses that higher

education institutions should be in tune with these transformations and think about how they can incorporate them (2014: 14):

> Technology is driving major changes in people's professional and personal lives across Europe and the world, impacting every facet of society and is now an integral part of how most people interact, work, learn and access knowledge and information. New and emerging technologies are already starting to have a transformative effect on higher education provision. There is every reason to harness the potential of these developments to the service of high quality higher education.

Thus, there is a triple need for change: educational institutions must understand the challenges of this new society of technology and information, must follow the new faces and characteristics of this generation immersed in cyberculture and must provide new educational practices, carried out by a teacher in with these challenges. It is urgent to train the trainers for this new reality, with information and communication technologies, image, teaching platforms, new didactic resources, always with use based on critical thinking, since technology is not enough, the teacher is what is the agent of scientific, technical and emotional change. As Hargreaves notes (2005: 835), "Good teachers are not just well-oiled machines. They are emotional, passionate beings who communicate with their students and manage to fill their work and their classes with pleasure, creativity, challenges and joys. "

For this triple shift, one factor is fundamental in the process of rethinking pedagogical innovation in Higher Education: specific competences motivated by a constantly evolving society. As stated in the OECD report (OECD, 2018, p.6):

> The concept of competency implies more than just the acquisition of knowledge and skills; it involves the mobilisation of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to meet complex demands. Future-ready students will need both broad and specialised knowledge. Disciplinary knowledge will continue to be important, as the raw material from which new knowledge is developed, together with the capacity to think across the boundaries of disciplines and "connect the dots". Epistemic knowledge, or knowledge about the disciplines, such as knowing how to think like a mathematician, historian or scientist, will also be significant, enabling students to extend their disciplinary knowledge. Procedural knowledge is acquired by understanding how something is done or made – the series of steps or actions taken to accomplish a goal. Some procedural knowledge is domain-specific, some transferable across domains. It typically develops through practical problem-solving, such as through design thinking and systems thinking. Students will need to apply their knowledge in unknown and evolving circumstances. For this, they will need a broad range of skills, including cognitive and meta-cognitive skills (e.g. critical thinking, creative thinking, learning to learn and self-regulation); social and emotional skills (e.g. empathy, self-efficacy and collaboration); and practical and physical skills (e.g. using new information and communication technology devices).

In this context, the knowledge of new Literacies is fundamental. On September 8, 2017, International Literacy Day for UNESCO, the following objectives were outlined:

1. *To reflect on what it means to be literate in increasingly digitally-mediated societies;*
2. *To explore effective policies and programmes for literacy skills development in a digital world; and*
3. *To explore how digital technologies can support progress towards the Sustainable Development Goal 4, especially Target 4.6 on youth and adult literacy.*

According to this agenda, it is extremely relevant that we can pay more attention to these competencies. In the UNESCO Report (2013, p. 27) *Global Media and Information Literacy Assessment Framework: Country Readiness and Competencies* are alerted to the challenges of new literacies:

> Novel literacy concepts have evolved during the last decades as a response to the growing power and impact of information, the media, ICTs and the digital world, including cyberliteracy, digital literacy, e-literacy, information literacy, media literacy, news literacy, technology or ICT literacy, and many

> others. Some of these literacies are more independent, well scoped, and supported by theories and empirical evidence. Others are more novel and interconnected to other compound concepts, such as multi-literacies, trans-literacy, and media and information literacy.

Through the principles and assumptions set forth above, we can verify that the teacher of Higher Education in the XXI century faces new horizons in pedagogical innovation and that competences in the area of Literacies make it possible to adequately address the following challenges of contemporary society (Antunes and Gonçalves, 2016, p.169):

> - The volatility (and rapid obsolescence) of the information relevant to the approach to the problems that, in a changing world, it makes sense to treat at the level of higher education;
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> - The uncertainty of the near future, in a time of super velocity, superconnection and maximum unpredictability of events;
>
> - The complexity of the hyperconnected world, with the diffusion of multiple points of view, intentions, priorities, forces and trends generating change;
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> - The ambiguity is inherent in the excess and abundance of information that makes reality confuse, through our incapacity, with unreality and confusion.

As defended in the *Report to the European Commission on New Modes of learning and teaching in higher education* (2014, p, 10):

> The higher education landscape is undergoing significant change as a result of technological innovations. We are witnessing changes in the way higher education is taught and in the way students learn. While the conventional setting of the lecture hall will continue to form the bedrock of higher education systems, it will be enhanced by the integration of new tools and pedagogies, and it will be complemented by many more online learning opportunities and a greater variety of providers in higher education.

As Flávia Vieira points out regarding the concept of pedagogical innovation (2016, p.9), this concept does not follow unique patterns, although the desire to improve teaching and learning is central, but it is not closed in the classroom because the that goes on is linked to the policies that determine what is relevant in the teaching work, whether there are support structures for students and teachers, as well as the very configuration of teachers' professional identity in the face of globalization, the question of pedagogy and its relation to research.

In fact, technological change and the latest social changes have transformed education and training for the young, as mentioned in the OECD report (2019: 16):

> Technology now allows us to give all children, regardless of their social background, where they live or the jobs their parents do, the same chance to meet people – if not in person, then via the Internet – who do all kinds of jobs, to help them understand the vast array of opportunities open to them. It is also essential that employers and educators work far more closely together to help broaden young people's horizons, raise their aspirations, and provide them with the vital work-related knowledge and skills that will help them as they make the transition from school to work. Not only will these kinds of efforts give young people the best possible start in life, but they will also reduce the mismatch between young people's aspirations and the demands of the labour market, thereby ensuring that we have a workforce that will secure our economic prosperity in the future.

They thus make sense the recommendations 3 and 5 of the High-*Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education* to the European Commission (2014, p. 54):

> Recommendation 3. The integration of digital technologies and pedagogies should form an integral element of higher education institutions strategies for teaching and learning. Clear goals and objectives should be defined and necessary organisational support structures (such as the European Academy of Teaching and Learning) established to drive implementation.

> Recommendation 5. All staff teaching in higher education institutions should receive training in relevant digital technologies and pedagogies as part of initial training and continuous professional development.

In conclusion, we can highlight that the challenges of pedagogical innovation clearly go through the inclusion of Literacies throughout life, because we need to keep up with the constant changes in our society and Education. Moreover, we need to train the professionals and citizens of the future (OECD, 2018, p.5):

> Education has a vital role to play in developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that enable people to contribute to and benefit from an inclusive and sustainable future. Learning to form clear and purposeful goals, work with others with different perspectives, find untapped opportunities and identify multiple solutions to big problems will be essential in the coming years. Education needs to aim to do more than prepare young people for the world of work; it needs to equip students with the skills they need to become active, responsible and engaged citizens.

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