

Education never stands still—it moves, adapts, and transform in response to new realities, while reshaping society in turn. This collection explores some forces defining learning today: digital tools, intercultural dialogue, artistic expression, and the call for ecological responsibility. At its core, education remains a space for negotiation and reinvention.

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PROCEEDINGS

02

Cultures, Practices, and Change

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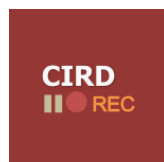
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Vol. 2

**Cultures,
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EDUCATING FOR RESPONSIBLE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

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In the digital age, freedom is often reduced to online interactions, leading to a depersonalized society shaped by digital media. This transformation profoundly affects our behaviour, perception, and social interactions. Education is crucial in helping us understand this shift, preventing a digital panopticon (Byung-Chul, 2015) and promoting active societal participation and critical thinking. Integrating digital technologies in education presents opportunities and challenges, requiring awareness and pedagogical sensitivity from all stakeholders. Effective digital education involves promoting the conscious, critical, and creative use of technology, resisting reductionist views of knowledge, and addressing the risks of social exclusion and online harassment. The panel was organized to address these challenges and possibilities from various angles and disciplines. The discussions that derived from the presentations thus highlighted the importance of ethical, critical, and inclusive approaches to digital education, aiming to foster responsible digital transformation and active citizenship. Insights from these discussions are here structured around three overall perspectives, namely, *ethical perspectives*, *critical mindsets*, and *inclusion*.

responsible digital transformation; critical thinking; active citizenship; social justice; education.

INTRODUCTION

In the information regime, being free does not mean acting, but clicking, liking, and posting (Byung-Chul, 2022). In this critical vision, humanity lives in an environment transformed by digital media without understanding them, and so becomes a swarm of individuals crushed in a collective and depersonalizing dimension.

There is no doubt that the ubiquity of digital technology is profoundly changing our behaviour, perception, sensitivity, thinking, and living together: technology interacts with the world, with our world, to transform it. Education has the responsibility to help us understand this paradigm shift to ensure that the scenario of a digital panopticon (Byung-Chul, 2015) does not become a reality and that digital technologies can, on the contrary, encourage active participation in society and the development of critical thinking. From this perspective, every activity aimed at understanding digital media is an activity in the search for freedom.

Digitization in education and schools comes with opportunities and challenges and

calls for awareness from teachers, school leaders/principals, students, and parents. Digital technologies must be used for training with pedagogical sensitivity and awareness of how knowledge construction processes occur. Promoting the conscious, critical, and creative use of digital technologies means resisting the idea of knowledge consisting solely of data devoid of theoretical foundations. It means knowing how to filter information with critical awareness and distancing oneself from easy and superficial interpretations of reality. It means resisting reductionism with its simplifications and realizing the authoritarian danger that hides therein.

Children and young people's everyday lives include many forms of digital activity – regardless of age. Many of these activities are entertainment-oriented and occur in the home sphere, such as games, films, and social media. Students may take these media habits with them to school. This can be a good starting point for teachers since they can use the students' home-based media experiences. Many young people are, for example, very good at making short film recordings, which can be used as a resource in multimodal media productions under the auspices of the school/teacher. Furthermore, some studies suggest that students who are gamers in their spare time may demonstrate good collaboration skills and some proficiency in English. Nonetheless, children's and young people's media habits may also impact everyday school life less advantageously. Social exclusion, harassment, and bullying take on different forms online, and often the activities can be kept hidden from teachers and parents for a long time and, in the worst case, develop into very destructive actions. How can teachers deal with this? As noted, several challenges and possibilities come with digitalization, and some of these were further explored and addressed in the panel, which included two sessions and ten contributions from scholars across Europe. Together the contributions collectively emphasized the importance of integrating ethical, critical, and inclusive approaches to digital education, aiming to foster responsible digital transformation and active citizenship. In the remaining parts, we will elaborate on the insights provided by the participants. These are structured around three overall perspectives: *ethical perspectives*, *critical mindset*, and *inclusion*.

ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES

A major concern regarding digital transformation in education relates to ethical perspectives. As this topic may be vast, it must be narrowed down to distinct situations or sub-areas relevant to education. Here are three examples of areas that were addressed in the panel. First, participants in the panel discussed the need for education that integrates ethical considerations with technical and critical skills to foster responsible digital citizenship. This was highlighted by several of the presenters. For example, Klykken introduced us to analogue games and how they may help expand our understanding of data literacy. Poletti highlighted the importance of understanding the ethical implications of algorithmic decisions and AI. Moreover, ethical concerns also touch upon issues on AI and inclusive education. For example, Benedetto and Bertelli, along with Zanazzi and Tømte stressed the importance of

implementing AI in education with a deliberate focus on ethics to avoid perpetuating biases and discrimination. Pursuing ongoing evaluation and proper training is important to ensure that AI supports inclusivity. Another ethical dimension was suggested by Marci, who relates it to hate speech in the digital era. In her presentation, Marci proposed educational activities that promote critical thinking and social change to counter online hate speech, emphasizing the ethical responsibility of higher education to foster a respectful digital environment.

CRITICAL MINDSET

In diverse ways, the panellists highlighted the need for cultivating a critical mindset toward digitalization. The discussion highlighted the need for critical awareness of digital media's impact and the role of digital literacy in fostering active citizenship and combating misinformation. This may be conducted in coherence with students' profiles (e.g. their age, previous experiences with digital media, maturity, and the like). Teachers need to be trained to be capable of fostering this development. In the panel, concepts such as digital literacy and digital citizenship were discussed and further elaborated. For example, Gui and colleagues presented findings from a longitudinal study that explored the impact of early digital media use on learning outcomes, particularly among socio-economically deprived families. By using longitudinal data, they analysed the effects of early access to smartphones and other digital devices on students' academic performance. They argue that we need robust empirical evidence to understand digital inequality and its long-term effects, advocating for policies addressing these disparities and supporting responsible digital engagement from a young age.

In his presentation, Trebisacce looked to Dewey's philosophy of education as a process of socialization and discussed the skills needed for digital citizenship, suggesting critical thinking, ethical use of technology, and active participation in digital society. It was emphasized that a reflective and critical attitude towards digital technologies should be fostered, promoting ethical and responsible use to support active citizenship and social inclusion. This also relates to the educational potential of interactive digital narratives to enhance critical digital literacies, preparing students for responsible engagement with digital media, as outlined by Schlauch in his presentation.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Digital technologies, including AI, have the potential to both hinder and promote inclusivity in education. Responsible and ethical implementation, along with proper training for educators, is crucial. This was a key message from Zanazzi and Tømte in their presentation. They also provided several examples of how AI may be adopted in developing assistive technologies and personalized learning experiences for students with disabilities. Another perspective on inclusiveness relates to how the use of non-digital games to promote digital competencies may also foster social connections simply by promoting an inclusive approach to technology use in

education, as suggested by Klykken. The panel also suggested an overall need to integrate socio-technical and socio-economic knowledge to navigate digital transformations responsibly. In other words, educators and students were encouraged to understand the political economy and the overall technological affordances of digital technology.

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