

RE-IMAGINING

TEACHING SOCIALISATION TO STUDENTS IN THE ERA OF TECHNOLOGY

REINVENTAR LA ENSEÑANZA DE LA SOCIALIZACIÓN A LOS ESTUDIANTES EN LA ERA TECNOLÓGICA

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ABSTRACT

The ability to fully socialise is one of the crucial aspects necessary for the full development of learners. In an age dominated by mobile technology, developing socialisation skills in pupils brings new problems and opportunities. Parents and teachers are confronted with a myriad of new challenges. While there is a noticeable surge in the use of technology in schools worldwide, it is disconcerting to note the limited empirical research on the perspectives of teachers and parents about how socialisation can be taught. If educational support for student adaptation and socialisation is not emphasised during the schooling period, it may diminish the ability of learners to socialise as adults. This article employs a phenomenological approach and semi-structured interviews with educators and parents in South Africa to explore their perspectives on how to effectively impart socialisation skills in an age dominated by mobile phones and other digital devices. The findings suggest that both teachers and parents, motivated by a desire to ensure their children's success, work tirelessly to impart invaluable socialisation skills using verbal admonishments, punitive measures, affirmative reinforcements and, occasionally, exemplification.

Keywords: Socialisation, Technology, Education, Teaching and learning, Technology era.

RESUMEN

La capacidad de socializar plenamente es uno de los aspectos cruciales necesarios para el pleno desarrollo de los aprendices. En una época dominada por la tecnología móvil, el desarrollo de las capacidades de socialización de los alumnos plantea nuevos problemas y oportunidades. Padres y profesores se enfrentan a un sinnúmero de nuevos retos. Aunque el uso de la tecnología en las escuelas de todo el mundo está experimentando un notable auge, resulta desconcertante la escasa investigación empírica sobre las perspectivas de profesores y padres acerca de cómo puede enseñarse la socialización. Si no se hace hincapié en el apoyo educativo a la adaptación y socialización de los alumnos durante el periodo de escolarización, puede disminuir su capacidad de socialización como adultos. Este artículo emplea un enfoque fenomenológico y entrevistas semiestructuradas con educadores y padres de Sudáfrica para explorar sus perspectivas sobre cómo impartir eficazmente las habilidades de socialización en una época dominada por los teléfonos móviles y otros dispositivos digitales. Los resultados sugieren que tanto los profesores como los padres, motivados por el deseo de garantizar el éxito de sus hijos, trabajan incansablemente para impartir habilidades de socialización de valor incalculable mediante el uso de reprimendas verbales, medidas punitivas, refuerzos afirmativos y, ocasionalmente, la ejemplificación.

Palabras clave: Socialización, Tecnología, Educación, Enseñanza y aprendizaje, Era tecnológica

INTRODUCTION

The rise of mobile phones and digital technology has transformed communication and interaction among individuals, especially affecting younger generations. In South Africa, a nation with diverse socio-economic backgrounds, the influence of technology on socialisation among students presents unique challenges and opportunities. Socialisation, the process through which individuals learn and adopt the norms, values, and behaviours suitable to their society, is vital during childhood and adolescence. This study seeks to understand the views of parents and teachers on teaching socialisation in this digital age.

The goal of schooling today is to improve both academic achievements and student socialisation. To achieve this, schools prioritise offering comprehensive educational support to students, focusing on adaptation and socialisation processes throughout the schooling journey. This crucial topic has gained significant attention and discussion across various school stages, including preschool to lower-secondary education, particularly in developed countries. As the world becomes increasingly technologically advanced, many countries witness an increase in children being raised and educated in highly technology-driven environments, argues Kolluoğlu and Dincer (2023).

In South Africa, Makwanya and Oni (2019) posit that in a country with diverse socio-economic contexts, the impact of technology on socialisation among students poses unique challenges and opportunities. As parents and teachers spend the most time with the learners, it is imperative to seek their views on how they can facilitate socialisation.

While there is a noticeable surge in the use of technology in schools, particularly lower-secondary education, it is disconcerting to note the lack of empirical research on the perspectives of parents and teachers about how they can instil socialisation in learners. To address this research gap, a comprehensive study is undertaken, specifically focusing on the views of parents and educators.

It is essential to remember that as teachers and parents create opportunities for children to succeed, their mission must always be to “walk the talk”. Teachers and parents need to model appropriate social behaviours, reinforce these behaviours, and help students understand and practise democratic principles. In the classroom, students learn that when they share, they become part of a team, belong, grow, and are capable of contributing ideas and solutions. Having discussed all the other issues, what remains unexplored is the complex dynamics of how parents and teachers view their roles in fostering a culture of socialisation, offering valuable insights to both. The study

also aims to bridge the gap between practice and theory, ensuring that educational systems are equipped with evidence-based strategies to balance the use of technology in education with learners' socialisation skills. Therefore, the main research question is how teachers and parents can re-imagine teaching socialisation skills to learners in the digital era.

Understanding Socialisation

Socialisation is defined as a process by which individuals learn to become part of the groups and society to which they belong and through which they develop the capacity to function as human beings. Socialisation takes place in ‘society’ or, more accurately, in social interactions. Students are exposed to an intricate symbolic structure that forms the basis of their society and culture through social interactions. According to previous research, a ‘symbolic system’ describes items like language, art, and manners that are symbolic and convey meaning (Sanger, 2010).

This suggests that students not only study the current symbols of their culture but also gain insight into a civilisation that is continuously producing new symbols. Students become cooperative members of their community and creative contributors to their cultures in this way. Socialisation begins during infancy when a person learns basic skills and values from their family and caregivers. As the individual grows, social interactions expand to include peers, teachers, and members of the community. The process also involves learning the norms, values, and beliefs prevalent in the society in which the individual lives. It is in the growing phases of learners that the roles of parents and teachers become critical. The norms and values serve as a guide for behaviour and help individuals fit into social structures. The influence of socialisation is not limited to childhood and adolescence; it continues throughout adulthood and old age. As individuals encounter new experiences and environments, they may need to adapt and acquire new skills to function effectively. As referred to by Sanger (2010), socialisation also plays a role in shaping an individual's beliefs, attitudes, and perspectives about the world around them. Socialisation is therefore not only about fitting into a society but also about shaping the society through the contributions and creativity of its members. To conclude, socialisation is a fundamental aspect of human development and plays a crucial role in shaping individuals and societies. Through social interaction and the acquisition of symbolic systems, individuals learn to navigate the complexities of their cultures and become active participants in their societies. It is through socialisation that individuals acquire the tools, skills, and values necessary to function as contributing members of their

communities. What has not yet been fully explored are the perspectives of parents and teachers on what strategies they can and do employ to enhance socialisation in their children.

Existing literature provides a broad spectrum of views about the impact of technology on socialisation. Scholars such as Arnd-Caddigan (2015) argue that technology, especially mobile phones, can lead to superficial interactions and diminished face-to-face communication skills. In contrast, other researchers highlight the potential of digital platforms to enhance social connectivity and collaborative learning (Makwanya and Oni, 2019). In the South African context, studies (Makwanya and Oni, 2019) emphasise the dual role of technology in facilitating access to information and contributing to social isolation. This review synthesises these perspectives to contextualise current research within the broader academic discourse.

The theories of Weidman (2020) and Valiente et al. (2020) offer a lens through which socialisation in the era of technology can be enforced, provided that the organisation and operation of society create a framework in which individuals can develop. Adhering to the rules established by society is essential to remaining a part of it. According to Bowman et al. (2022), teachers need to constantly update themselves on the best practices and pedagogical skills so that they can create innovative teaching methods and nurture students' skills and abilities, such as listening, reasoning, questioning, convincing, reflecting, and thinking evaluatively and carefully. Teachers could motivate their students to think critically and scientifically, and assist them to become problem solvers and members of society who focus more on providing solutions to challenges. Such students remain self-motivated to continue learning throughout life. To prepare students for the globalisation era and to become citizens of knowledge-based societies who actively participate in the creation of new information, inclusive classrooms should encourage inquiry from a variety of perspectives on socially accepted knowledge.

On the other hand, parents' views on teaching students how to socialise, involve setting rules, cultivating good character, and the role socialisation plays in behaviour and success, according to Purnamasari (2021). Parents, in most instances, lay down rules for when mobile phones can be used at home, limiting game time, and encouraging physical activity. Ariani et al. (2022) highlight the importance of collaborative efforts between teachers and parents in imparting essential socialisation skills to students, advocating for hands-on approaches both in and out of the classroom.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe teacher and parent perceptions of students and the effect of technology on student socialisation. This study used an interpretative qualitative research approach to explore the perceptions of parents and teachers. According to Willig (2014), a basic interpretative approach allows researchers to gather qualitative data and develop new understandings of a phenomenon to provide theoretical accounts of the interpretations of participants. Since the purpose of this study was to describe perceptions, a qualitative design allowed the researcher to listen to the experiences of the individuals and to explore their views and interactions while attempting to investigate the meaning of the phenomenon. Furthermore, qualitative research design provided the opportunity to gather an in-depth understanding of socialisation and how technology impacts this process.

The sample consisted of 8 parents and 10 high school teachers selected through purposive sampling. According to Campbell et al. (2020), purposive sampling matches the sample to the aims and objectives of the research, thus improving the study's rigour and the trustworthiness of the data and results. Semi-structured interviews were recorded for about 20-30 minutes and conducted at homes and school offices. The data analysis involved statistical methods for the qualitative component and thematic analysis for the qualitative data. The researcher adheres to the principles of ethics as granted by the University of South Africa. These included fair and just treatment of participants, guarantees of confidentiality and non-disclosure of participants' identities.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The data was presented using pseudonyms for the participants to protect their privacy, and code categories were applied to examine the data thematically (Chiavacci, 2020). The data analysis is based on what the article hoped to establish, namely, different perspectives of teachers and parents on how they can teach learners to socialise without relying on technology. The following themes emerged from the discussions: 'The role of technology during development', 'Cultivation of good character to enhance socialisation', and 'Alignment and Discrepancies between Teacher and Parent Perspectives'. The process of developing themes served as a framework for organising and engaging with the data, leading to the results presented in this article.

RESULTS-DISCUSSION

The findings are discussed around the themes that developed during the analysis of the data. It is also important

to note that the discussion of findings includes an infusion of the reviewed literature.

Technology during development

The teacher and parent responses revealed some difficulties in determining if technology usage is problematic, particularly during the developmental years of young individuals. When parents or educators notice a child being overly reliant on technology, neglecting social interactions, being less physically active, and experiencing a decrease in concentration, concerns are raised. *I get worried when I see my daughter sitting on the bed in her room, busy on the phone* (Parent A). The root cause of seeking pleasure and relaxation through gaming poses a question: is it caused by a lack of social skills, acceptance issues, or shyness? *Or is the child engaging excessively because of peer influence?* (Teacher 1). The concerns shared by parents were not very different from those of the educators, who indicated that at times they worry about the obsessiveness shown by learners towards mobile phones, even during lessons. The level of confusion and concern as to whether technology is good for education is like the concern about whether it will affect the social development of learners. It is therefore not surprising that teachers and parents perceive too much reliance on technology as leading to neglect of social interactions. In mitigation of the above, Montag et al. (2021) suggest that implementing guidelines for appropriate technology use can alleviate concerns, but children must become more self-aware of the effects of excessive technology use on their social skills, without overlooking the valuable potential that technology offers.

The other unpleasant aspect of technology on learners is the misuse of mobile phones. Recently, it has become increasingly common for learners to bully others on social media. Other forms of bullying include sending or doctoring pictures to reflect a certain unpleasant image of other learners. A teacher at school A indicated that: *I have had several students who have been bullied on social media, and I banned the use of phones in my class* (Teacher 2). Research in this area of bullying of other students, through social media, needs to progress, with additional empirical studies examining changes in children's socialisation habits. While teachers are concerned that technology can impede learners' ability to socialise, they also see themselves as responsible for guiding their learners. This finding could potentially shape parents' understanding of how technology affects their children's social and emotional growth. As more evidence emerges and policies are shaped, communities may be able to create environments that promote healthy social interactions for children.

Cultivation of good character to facilitate socialisation

One of the open-ended questions prompted parents to offer their viewpoints on the topic of teaching socialisation. Several parents emphasised the significance of cultivating good character and the role it plays in behaviour and success. For instance, one parent asserted that *'Good character lays the foundation for exemplary conduct'* (Parent C) while another stressed that *'Success in life hinges on good character'* (Parent D). Parents underscored the importance of instilling values such as honesty, perseverance, respect, and empathy as part of a well-rounded character education. One parent highlighted the collaborative efforts of teachers and parents in imparting essential socialisation skills to students, advocating for a hands-on approach both in and out of the classroom. The parents' views concur with Purnamasari (2021), who emphasises the need for teachers to actively engage in teaching important values to their students.

Alignment and Discrepancies between Teachers' and Parents' Perspectives

Establishing positive relationships between parents and teachers is crucial for children's development of communication skills. Teacher trainers should focus on improving teachers' ability to interact and have conversations while also enhancing their perceptions of different teaching methods. During parent-teacher conferences, educators could educate parents about their roles in creating communication opportunities and offering suggestions. By exchanging experiences, teachers and parents can share different strategies and discuss various situations, ultimately benefiting the instruction given to children. Despite potential conflicts in different approaches, understanding teacher perspectives on teaching socialisation skills to children is important. Cultural influences, ongoing parent-teacher communication and the home environment all play a role in shaping how children learn traditional socio-communicative skills. To create social opportunities for young children, Frechette et al. (2020) posit that teachers need to understand children's social behaviours and how they are taught these behaviours at home.

Strategies for Effective Socialisation Teaching in the Digital Age

The goal here is to think about how we might improve socialisation instruction now, considering why and how we teach socialisation should enable us to do so more successfully in a digital environment.

Utilising Apps for the promotion of cultural activities

Participants suggested integrating technology with traditional socialisation activities, for instance, using

educational apps that promote group activities or organising events that require digital detox periods. An educator at school B suggested that “the *phones must also teach students our traditional games, dances and folklore*”. The statement from the teacher implies that mobile phones can contribute a lot to the socialisation of learners and teach them about their culture. The educator also alluded to the fact that because students are always “glued to the phone screens”, there is a lot that they can learn about how to socialise from the phones. The assertions by the teachers concurred with Makwanya and Oni (2019), who argue that technology, mobile phones in this instance, can play a pivotal role not only in socialisation but also in inculcating culture.

The other strategy to teach socialisation in the digital environment is peer-to-peer interaction and dialogue. One approach might be, for example, for a student might engage in a peer interaction activity like a group of students exchanging their posts and offering each other feedback, while at the same time, on an online platform, they may have a shared conversation about it in class. Managing the doing and done at once positions and portrays students. In this way, students are asked to take on academic and social identities in a context where they are both supported and challenged to shape these identities.

In the meantime, other collaborative digital applications may help children develop their identities and social skills. Collaboration is more likely to succeed when it is both structured and adaptable. Social skills, especially the capacity to reality-test what others might want from you, negotiate that need, and communicate to others that you understand, agree, or disagree with them, may be best developed through tasks that demand structure and dependency.

Utilising Digital Tools and Platforms

The advent of advanced techniques for teaching trauma healing has recently created opportunities to educate conceptual understandings in previously unattainable ways. In the modern classroom, social media, mobile gadgets, and networked computers are all available for use in overt or covert teaching-learning processes. Particularly in the third century, when socialisation instruction is very essential, this is a positive development for educational institutions (Adejare et al., 2022). Socialisation education ensures that pupils learn and practise the social skills essential to succeed in social contexts, going beyond merely imparting the necessary social knowledge. When teaching job skills, instructors need to use socialisation techniques that go far beyond simply providing a practice workplace. Furthermore, rather than merely teaching abstract

concepts like rules and facts, students must get as much practice as possible in developing the social skills necessary for successful interpersonal engagement.

CONCLUSION

In this article, perspectives of teachers and parents have been explored, prompted by limited research on how learners can be taught to socialise in a digital era. Technology has lately brought some unforeseen challenges, especially when it comes to the socialisation of learners; therefore, it warrants attention as it has the potential to deprive some learners of socialisation skills.

Educators have always been aware that the most effective methods for teaching social and emotional skills, also known as character virtues, are not developed through specific projects, events, or books. Instead, they understand that virtue is nurtured through the daily routines and habits of classroom work, especially when supported by strong partnerships with parents. While parents instil beliefs and values in their children, schools are responsible for teaching the skills students will need in the future. For some parents, relinquishing this responsibility is challenging. The evidence in this article demonstrates that when teachers and parents discuss the skills they believe students should learn, they often use the term ‘skills’ to refer to attitudes and agency. Students who demonstrate responsibility, for example, are punctual and exhibit self-management by turning off cell phone ringtones when necessary. They also know how to show empathy to those in need. ‘Social and emotional skills’ imply that they can be taught and measured; what students truly require is to be surrounded by individuals who authentically and meaningfully demonstrate these skills. They need to witness responsible, self-managed, empathetic, and understanding behaviour being modelled and discussed by teachers and parents, and to see these behaviours linked to academics and expectations for both the school and personal choices. The article extends our knowledge of how important it is for learners to be able to socialise in the era of technology. The research has made a valuable contribution to the theories and debates of teaching learners how to socialise in a digital age. Several strategies on how technology can be used to teach socialisation have been provided. These building blocks open a powerful pathway for teaching students how to socialise.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Emanating from the discussion and the conclusions that emerged from the study, as a way forward, the following recommendations are made: It is advised that teachers must at least be technologically literate so that they can communicate the pitfalls to students and their parents.

This is important to teachers with varying degrees of ICT training, as suggested by teachers in the study. Education policies on the use of technology in schools must be alive to the concerns of parents. Teachers are supposed to be bold and innovative in the school teaching and learning process. This boldness must be extended to the learning environment since learners are going to be bombarded with technologies inside and outside of school. Parents also need to understand the positive influence of technology rather than just fearing its negative influences.

There is a need for a more supportive, inclusive environment in which all students feel welcomed, accepted, and valued. In a supportive environment, belongingness and community are nurtured—two things that strongly correlate with student success.

It would be interesting to explore other perspectives in the future, such as technology designers or content writers. The design of the contents for technological materials and tools might also play a significant role in determining how technology is being used as a form of teaching and learning.

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