

Educational Aspects of Digital Humanism

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Abstract

In the presented paper, the authors' intention is to define the educational aspects of digital humanism as it is understood in the educational work with the digital generation living in a more and more diverse culture, and to highlight the anticipatory components of education from the aspect of digital humanism. The authors' aim is not to provide a complex picture of the educational aspects of digital humanism but to present a brief overview of the issues related to it. As research in this field does not have a long tradition in Slovakia. The presented paper can serve as a source of inspiration and as the basis for future research.

Keywords:

Digital Humanism
Components of Education
Digital Generation
Education

1 Introduction

There are rich available on the issues of digital humanism can be found, but there is no one generally accepted definition of it. In international scholarly literature, several approaches to digital humanism can be identified, e.g.:

1. *Digital humanism as a trend in human resources management*, as the recognition that digital business revolves around people, not technology. CIOs and business leaders who recognize that digital business revolves around people's value, are able to transform their employees' capabilities into product, service and market gains. In this sense, digital humanism is in line with work and businesses can promote the efficiency of the labour force by adopting a digital lifestyle, and by some efficient changes and modifications of the existing working models (Meehan, 2016).
2. *Digital humanism as a trend towards the development of new technologies with the purpose of making human activities easier and more efficient*. Digital humanism seeks to enable people to achieve things they never believed possible or redefine the way their goals can be achieved. Digital humanism drives innovation and one of the key factors propelling digital humanism is a common view that digital technology, while having had a profoundly positive impact on society, has also been the source of much complexity in our modern lives. More organizations are recognizing that targeting that complexity through humanized digital systems is a significant source of innovation opportunity (Petty, 2015).
3. *Digital humanism as a trend in using digital technologies in humanities and social sciences*. Digital humanism is a field of scientific work across information technologies or digital technologies, and humanities disciplines, it involves a systematic use of digital resources in humanities, which introduce digital tools and methods in studying humanities, using new apps and technologies, which enable the implementation of new types of education and research (ADHO, 2016).

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2 Theoretical background of the educational aspects of digital humanism

In our paper, we understand digital humanism as a trend leading towards the *development of new technologies in order to make human activities easier and increase their efficiency*, as the process of identification and implementation of appropriate technologies in appropriate time; orientation on the development, production and introduction of autonomous mechanisms with the aim to use technologies allowing the application of human skills and capacity, e.g. intelligent solutions for households, etc.

Bednář (2010) declares that technological progress brings some specific situations in the moral and ethical contexts in the life of individuals and the whole society, e.g. digitalization changes the mutual communication between people in a certain sense, their everyday personal lives; has an impact on individuals' value orientation and influences their authentic manifestations as well – many applications allow self-expression and some kind of cyber-property. The above author cites Lanier, whom he considers to be a knowledgeable expert on the digital world, and who defends the concept of "new digital humanism" against the decisions made by software engineers, which can have a significant impact on the users' behavior and by which they can set definite and unalterable rules for future generations. Lanier points out that the effect of the Internet on the society and culture should be used for increasing the quality of life of individuals, not groups of people or masses. He believes that the earlier understanding of cyber space was influenced by the belief in good human nature. It can be demonstrated by some of the many existing applications or platforms of open resources which make people's private and professional lives much easier. It must be mentioned that individuals are forced neither to join social networks nor to use online services, they do not have to work with online content within the modern digital culture, but it is evident that one can also find many positive aspects of online life, too. Based on subjective observations of everyday life, it can be assumed that current social networks provide several platforms or services free of charge and offer new approaches to self-reflection and collaboration. Human individualities can get on very well on the Internet, sometimes maybe too well, manage things too easily, with minimal effort but highly effectively.

Faith (2015) shows and describes the market enthusiasm for the possibilities of the use of more than 2,000 sophisticated technologies under development, too. The author highlights that in the era of emerging manifestations of digital businesses and digital workplaces, the progress is focused on people. The development is oriented on *making human activities easier and more efficient – a growth of technologies supporting the so-called digital humanism is anticipated*. The expectations form new technologies promoting digital humanism are as follows:

- Identification and introduction of appropriate technologies in appropriate time;
- Development, production and introduction of autonomous devices and autonomous mechanisms with the purpose of taking an advantage from technologies allowing the application of human skills and capacity – intelligent solutions for households, lawnmowers, exterior and interior vacuum cleaners, autonomous vehicles, personal applications, virtual personal assistants, etc.

Here, the authors can clearly see space for the identification of the educational aspects of digital humanism in the educational work with the digital generation in a more and more diverse culture, therefore, in our paper, we focus on the educational aspects of digital humanism and the anticipatory components of education form the aspect of digital humanism.

Based on the above approaches, we can identify the following educational aspects having a direct impact on digital humanism understood as a trend towards *making human activities easier and more efficient*:

- a) **General** aspects of education and **partial** aspects of education – the **general aspects of education** having a direct impact on digital humanism should be derived from the educational aspects in the society on one hand but also from the **partial aspects of education** related to individual educational institutions in each period of an individual's life. It means that on the path to digital humanism as a way of making human activities easier and more effective in education, it is necessary to clearly define the aims of the whole society on one hand and the aims of individual educational institutions on the other hand, especially when educating the digital generation.
- b) **Global** aspects of education and **unique** aspects of education – the **global aspects of education** having a direct impact on digital humanism should be based on the specific aspects of education in the context of both written and "unwritten" social rules and norms, which should be preserved to such an extent that allows the anticipated growth of technologies to have a positive impact on the existing social norms and rules and their reasonable innovation and adjustment in case of an emerging need. In the context of digital humanism, the **unique aspects of education** should be defined as educational situations which are unique for an individual, a couple or a group being educated. The situation's or the individual's uniqueness and specificity are characteristic for them. It is the anticipated growth of technologies that can have a significant impact on the unique aspects of education as it can lead the educated person towards respecting the

uniqueness and the specificity of others in their ecologies throughout the whole process of education, which can be later reflected in the development of new intelligent technological solutions.

- c) **Current** aspects of education **and perspective** aspects of education – the *current aspects of education* which are close in time can be defined based on the up-to-date goals of education having a direct impact on digital humanism and, at the same time, in accordance with the *perspective aspects of education*, i.e. the perspective goals of education in the society. They should also respect the variety of educational environments – school, classroom, family, institutions offering leisure time activities, etc. Preparing an active citizen is a perspective aspect of education from which the current aspects of education must be derived. Goals can be achieved in short-term, medium-term or long-term depending on the anticipated growth of new technologies.
- d) **Short-term** aspects of education **and long-term** aspects of education – they should be set with regards to the context of the complex educational work with the members of the society. The long-term aspects of education should be reflected in the long-term goals of education, which should be divided into several short-term goals of education. After fulfilling one of the short-term goals of education, a new short-term goal of education is set with the intention to fulfil the global long-term goal, etc. This means that both the *short-term* aspects of education and the *long-term* aspects of education influence digital humanism directly and are oriented on making human activities easier and more efficient. They should be meaningfully divided into small steps and planned in a way which offers the possibility of regular updates in accordance with the predicted future development in the digital sphere which would make individuals' personal and professional lives easier.
- e) **Autonomous** aspects of education **and heteronomous** aspects of education which have a direct impact on digital humanism – they should be formulated in the goals of education respecting the basic differences in their definitions. The autonomous goals of education are set by the educated individuals themselves with regards to their own developmental and cognitive levels, and the heterogenous goals are given “externally” – by authorities, laws, legislation, norms, etc. Finding the solution for this conflict is in the centre of attention of pedagogical sciences which suggest some possible solutions, work out several procedures and the background of the educational compromise for the process of setting, modification and fulfilment of educational goals. Suggesting such solutions, measures, tactics and concepts applicable and efficient in the educational practice remains the basic requirement. From the point of view of digital humanism, regularly updated solutions for the elimination of the conflict between the *autonomous* aspects of education and the *heteronomous* aspects of education are required because of the anticipated growth of new technologies.
- f) **Individual** aspects of education **and group** aspects of education (individual goals are set for individuals and group goals are oriented on a larger group of people) having a direct effect on digital humanism – they should be derived from the goals of education in the process of setting and subsequent achieving them. All these goals should take into account those factors of educational reality, which promote the acceptance of the basic concepts of educational work together with the relevant constitutive elements of education, help emphasizing and following them and are beneficial in the process of their application within the whole process of monitoring and partial assessment of the extent to which the set goals have been fulfilled. At the same time, efforts should be made to find suitable and valid strategies that can be later modified, specified and successfully fulfilled. From the point of view of digital humanism, the *individual* aspects of education and the *group* aspects of education anticipate the formation of several free platforms and services providing new approaches to self-expression on the individual level and to cooperation on the level of groups.
- g) **Informative** aspects of education **and formative** aspects of education directly influencing digital humanism – they should be based on the *informative* goals of education focused on the cognitive aspects, on the acquisition of particular knowledge and factors crucial and important in the process of dealing with theoretical and practical tasks during one's life, and the *formative* goals of education, which are focused on the development of individuals' skill whose knowledge is understood as a means of further personal development, development of individuals' mental skills, cognition, memory, ways of expression, fantasy, etc. From the point of view of digital humanism, the development, production and introduction of autonomous devices and autonomous mechanisms with the intention to use technologies to promote the process of gaining new information and, at the same time, the application of human skills and capacity can be predicted.
- h) **Adaptational** aspects of education **and anticipatory** aspects of education closely related to digital humanism – they should be based on the *adaptational* goals of education, which are set taking into account the individual in the current educational situation with the aim to adopt to the current life conditions in the society, and on the *anticipatory* goals of education, which are oriented on various possibly occurring situations in the near and more distant future with regards to the future needs of an active member of the society. It means that on the path towards digital humanism and towards making human activities easier and more efficient, it is necessary to clearly identify the *adaptational* goals of education both on the

individual and global levels in the current situation on one hand and the *anticipatory* goals on the individual and global levels, even if the future development is very difficult to anticipate and to simulate, especially in the work of educational institutions with the digital generation.

- i) From the point of view of the **traditional** aspects of education **and** the **innovated** aspects of education, in the context of digital humanism, we should make clear which of the many *traditional* goals of education are still valid from the content point of view, which social norms are suitable, effective and stable as for the value orientation of both the whole society and individuals (e.g. whether leading towards good and mutual help in education is still topical), and, on the other hand, whether the *innovated* goals of education reflecting the current needs of every society are set in line with the principles of digital humanism. It is evident that such a situation would be optimal, if the traditional “verified” values were preserved and kept their functioning in the entire society, but they were reflected in the updated, innovated goals of education. Currently, education targeted on the prevention of non-substance abuse – Internet addiction, smart-phone addiction – and the strategies of dealing with them in the digital era can be given as an example.
- j) The **constituted** aspects of education **and** the **operative** aspects of education – in the context of digital humanism, they should be based on the *constituted* goals of education which can be defined as goals set in advance which can be modified, reconsidered, reformulated, and the *operative* goals of education, which represent the goals set during the educational process and which follow from the current educational situation and from the process of education of individuals (these can be short-term and long-term). From the aspect of digital humanism, it is clear that, for cyber space, a high degree of “instability” in the process of application of traditionally used procedures is characteristic.

In accordance with Wehner (2016), the authors emphasize that it is very difficult to stimulate the future development without knowing how various processes and phenomena will be interconnected in the future and which new phenomena will arise; to what extent will our favourite devices remind those that we use today; and where the maximum of automatization, which introduces more and more processes that do not require direct human participation, is. In agreement with the above cited author, the authors of the paper believe that there is a real chance of the creation of holistic jobs that give the individual the opportunity to learn something, to share something, to participate in the process of production from the beginning till the end, as it is, for instance, in many small and medium sized family businesses.

Such professions, where decisions are made based on the consideration of some specific circumstances and where more than one good decision exists, will be preserved in the future as well but they will be influenced by progress in the form of digitalization and the process of decision making will be realized on the basis of processed data, Wehner (2016) declares. An important question is how to deal with the potentials of rationalization in order to provide good and meaningful jobs to more people than today. As assumed by the above cited author, the way we deal with automatization is important. Some professionals consider "digital humanism" to be a complex change in the world of work, which can free people from the burden as the emphasis will be placed on meaningful activities and not the pay. For example, for businesses, it is very difficult to predict what their needs will be in five years. No one knows which specific professional competencies will be needed in 2021, so it is important to preserve the educational systems' and businesses' flexibility in order to be able to respond to the new requirements immediately after they realize what knowledge and skills are needed.

According to Wehner (2016), it is a challenge to synchronize the maximally fast technical systems with the maximally slow social systems. If we succeed, the projects of digital humanization of human lives may turn into "digital humanism". For this, fantasy and creativity are necessary as no suitable app has been developed so far.

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