

Council of Europe – Democracy in Action Project

Competences for Democratic Culture and Social Media

Focus Group Teachers, Haskovo, 5.4.2017

1. How the young people use social media?

It doesn't matter how critical we are but the true is that Facebook is a place which could be reached by different news and messages send by maximum number of people. Our students are there most of the time and they do send messages at a permanent basis. The social media become key communication space for the young but in the same time they are risky space.

I would like to share that in Haskovo here we do have a Facebook school. The teachers prepares assignments and the students do their home work and respond. In this situation we could say that the teacher is more like a leader than in the traditional role of one who transfers knowledge.

Literally our students do live in Facebook. It depends on their age, of course. When we talk about younger students Учениците живеят във фейсбук буквално. Разбира се, че зависи от възрастта. При по-малките групите, които учат they do participate in smaller groups. The situation is somewhat better among the older students because they could take care of themselves. It depends a lot what is the circle of friends they are involved in. Many students do have teachers as friends what is very useful. In this way they could learn a lot of thing. If you are a student and if you have access to the profile of the teacher, that sounds great. But that means as well that the students trusts the teacher.

I think that Facebook has a depersonalizing power, because one of the basic principles is imitation. In another words one makes something because the others are doing it.

Even in Roma schools the students chat a lot – in some cases they discuss fairytales they are reading.

Sometimes online conflicts continue to develop and intensify in real life.

The other basic thing for the net is sharing – all the time everybody says where is he/she , with whom he is and etc. You could see photos from coffee shops where hour by hour we are told where and with whom the young people are. This is a full self-disclosure, according to me.

At a much bigger degree the young people communicate nowadays using images. This is different type of communication. For example, the emoticons could be interpreted in a different way and from here a lot of misunderstanding could arise.

As well very often the students do change their profile or try to crash the other profiles. Instagram is broadly used and there do appear a lot of very personal things.

Let's say something positive – this new type of communication makes them more punctual persons. Of course, I do think that the uses and pluses of social media are much more- young people do communicate through it, they connect with their friends and step by step this communication becomes their way of life!

2. Do you think that communication in social media is problematic?

No, for the students in general there is no problem.

In some cases, when one is rejected by social media - this becomes a real problem. Another big problem we have when the young person is a cyberbullying target. Here the main point is to eliminate bullying as soon as possible, how to react effectively.

I think that the young people communicate faster and show up better in social media.

Yes, spelling and literacy in general is a problem, as well as use of Latin letters. The language of communication is rather concise, but this is the way how the young people of today communicate with their parents and between themselves.

We do witness cases of fast self-organization of big numbers of people in twitter. But as well often we do witness fake cases of self-organization.

At first glance, the young persons is free to decide how to present himself. But nevertheless some strange photos or other ways of self-presentation do appear.

From the other side, because the things are visible in the net there is an opportunity to react faster in such situations. In a word the Net makes rather visible some processes.

Yes, communication has different dimensions. The young person learn how to communicate being in the net. I have my doubts whether is possible communication to be kept under control or how much it is possible to mold, to form communication patterns of a person.

Communicating the young people acquire new competences –mastering gossips, voyeurship, exhibitionism.

While discussing the communication in the net I would like to say that it's typical that rendering and receiving emotions is realized with the help of emoticons. There's not real direct life connection. The images transmitted are different, the self-presentation is very interesting process. The students who are shy feel free online and try to design a new image of themselves. What they do lack in real life they try to compensate in a specific way online. Thus they start new friendships.

I think that when they communicate like this they lose the idea of real friendship. They simply put the friends in different graphs. Yes, internet delivers a wrong image of the world. The young people live in space of illusions.

Communication offline and online – these are new unexplored fields. I think that the problems appear when they move from one space to the other. Often we could observe – the young people do sit together but they do not communicate = they have their smartphones! I would define this like living a parallel life!

The alienation at home, misunderstanding, the ineffective or insufficient communication are the norm. We have to take into account that the need to communicate exists and this need is satisfied in the chat.

When we talk about fake or unreal self-presentation in the net, we have to point out that often the young people lie about their age and this is the beginning of many problems. The world changes itself and now in the communication offline, the lack or the bad quality of the feedback, of I-messages, ineffective listening are some

It's easier to communicate in the wrong way because it is not possible to see the one on the other side, how he reacts. The reaction is verbal or only with signs, the non-verbal behavior is invisible.

We know well that communication in real life is far from satisfactory – just to say that we could not recognize the feelings of the other and couldn't express well our own feelings.

3. What do you think happens with Human Rights in the net – the right to express oneself, the freedom of thought, of conscience, the right to privacy and cet.

I think that the key is in the respect of the rights of the others. And I'm not sure whether these rights are respected in our world. If this is so, how it could be otherwise in the net where as we did agree one feels free and less inhibited by the absence of face to face offline contacts?

Yes, the young people could express themselves as they like because no one does control them. Face to face communication is much more difficult. Online you could insult the other person. In real communication we follow some established and accepted norms of communication.

I think that there are rules in social media as well – once you participate you accept certain rules. Young people learn how to participate, to be active, to be equal in the communication. While communicating they do acquire the rules.

They take into account to whom the message is addressed. They ask me often how to approach somebody online. They learn how to be punctual. They answer that they will be late, that they could not attend the meeting. Online communication supports swift reactions. Мисля, че в по-голямата част наблюдаваме проектиране на личността от живото общуване в социалната мрежа.

4. Could the social media be used for forming social skills, attitudes, for developing social competences? If the young people spend more and more time in the net do you think this will expand their social competences?

No, in our education we do not speak about this – how to use social media for the development of the young person. We do not know as well whether the young

people has any confidence in our world, in us – if there is no confidence the learning and education are not possible.

What could be said – yes- human rights could be found among school standards but they are not taught at school. If this is not done in formal education what could be said about social networks, where learning is basically informal and where communication is based on whatever else, but not on human rights. That's why we could find a lot of aggression and unrestrained negative energy.

We do not know whether young people participation in social networks makes them part of networks or make them engaging in social initiatives. The time will show. We use the networks, when we work with students from other countries on EU projects.

Yes, all the young people are in the net but when there is an initiative, a chance to engage, to participate we could not see too many eager to be involved.

If an appropriate format could be found the development of social skills through social networks will work. Everyone could find what he/she is looking for there. We do not have to forget that though the net the young people could organize themselves.

The things happening in the net do not always occur offline. The young people are active in the net but not in real life.

I think that social networks do develop social responsibility and provide opportunities for making choices. They could make decisions of their own. This is their free choice. They realize projects in Facebook, they participate in our school in entrepreneurship project, for example. There, they do have special rules typical for their group. Information connected with entrepreneurship is published. The fast and appropriate reactions are of utmost importance. Thus they communicate, share, become emphatic.

I do think that the students are not quite sincere and this is typical for the life in the net. Sometime they pretend to present themselves for someone else and there is a lot of misunderstanding.

I think that we have to realize much more project through social networks and many more could be accomplished. Still this type of projects realization is not encouraged and it is difficult to find it in school programs. The school programs do not help neither the development of civic education , neither the fight with school violence.

I am not quite sure how much communication online could contribute for the development of social competences. Let's be clear – the capacity of civic education for social development of the young people has not been used in our system. I do not know what is the sense of realizing more in-service trainings when nothing is transferred at school. Do we have enough well trained teachers in civics – no! The same concerns media literacy , digital citizenship.

When you have information technologies lesson it is forbidden to the kids to enter Facebook. But they do have personal profiles designed by adults, by their parents. The question whether there is media literacy is a rhetoric one. The problem is not to disseminate tablets. The problem is how to work with these gadgets.

That's why we could have beautiful schemes of competencies , but young people competencies should not be developed at school neither their value system. Their stance toward information is absolutely uncritical. The net is neither a source of useful knowledge, neither a space which could stimulate and develop critical understanding. The net contains opportunities for developing of social skills, but up to now only opportunities, The net is not a place for non-formal not to speak about formal learning space. Everything depends on the chances provided but they are minimal and even these minimal chances are uneven in different educational settings.

If we consider the processes of a possible control over the net we do not know whether the control is whatever possible. The next question is he wants to control, how much should be this control and how it could be realized? I do not think that we now where we are going to. Everything develops so fast. This virtual world becomes a problem for the real world , not to speak about the education.

