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DIGGING

DIGital competences for engaGING future educators

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NEEDS

ANALYSIS

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Digital skills development is an educational goal of major importance in all the different fields of education. Regarding the university education and more specifically the courses of studies that focus on the educational field (future teachers and educators) in order for university students to achieve interaction with their environment, fellow students and professors must conquer not only Social but Digital skills as well (Τσουρλή et.al., 2022).

The importance of Digital Skills

The development of digital literacy has become a key element on the agenda of scholars, practitioners and policymakers worldwide (Iordache et. al., 2017). The importance of digital skills for teachers relies on the fact that there is a necessary integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) by digitizing teaching materials through modernized online platforms and digital practices (Tsourli et.al., 2022). All adults today need digital skills, not just better literacy but also better digital literacy. Basic digital skills improve career opportunities, reduce social inequality and increase social cohesion, inclusion and active citizenship (http://www.moec.gov.cy/en/). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Learning Framework 2030 states digital literacy as a core fundamental competency for future education.

The need of Digital Skills

As the Ministry of Education states in Cyprus, almost one-eighth of Cypriots have never used the internet. During 2020 only 45% of people aged between 16 and 74 possessed basic digital skills (against the EU average of 58%) based on the European (DESI, 2020).

It is noted that the majority of the adult population of Cyprus, who have no experience or basic computer skills, are people of low educational level and people belonging to the age group of 55-65 years. Although the country has improved its score in recent years, Cyprus is still below the EU average on basic digital skills. One out of two Cypriots lacks basic digital skills (DESI, 2022). Furthermore, the results of various studies underline the

lack of digital skills in Cyprus's adult population. For example, in the Meletiou-Mavrotheris et al., (2017) research it was underlined that university students' knowledge and self-efficacy in using e-learning tools do not directly equate to being a digital learner equipped with the necessary digital skills.

Efforts towards the development of Digital Skills

In May 2019, Cyprus adopted its 'Cyprus Industrial Strategy Policy'. In January 2020, the government approved the national strategy on Artificial Intelligence (AI), while a new cybersecurity strategy has been in place since 2021. These strategies are aligned with and support the digital transition actions set out in the Recovery and Resilience Plan.

Furthermore, in Cyprus, the Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy was established in 2020. The mission of the Ministry is to support scientific research, invest in innovative entrepreneurship and implement an ambitious digital transformation reform. The Deputy Ministry aspires to develop a modern and efficient state, competitive at the European and international level, and a dynamic digital economy where every citizen and every business will be able to grow and prosper. The Ministry has created the Digital Skills strategic National plan 2021-2025, which it targets to create action towards digitalizing Cyprus across each of the three dimensions: government, society, economy. The 'Digital Strategy for Cyprus (2020-2025)', under the responsibility of the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy (DMRID) should accelerate Cyprus' digital transformation (DESI, 2022).

In addition, there are co-funded European projects implemented in Cyprus that aim at advancing and developing Digital Skills. Some examples are the following:

- The Hopeful project aimed at extending teachers' competencies in effectively teaching literacy, numeracy and digital skills to refugee children https://www.hopeful-project.eu/

- The DigitALAD project aims to build the capacity of adult educators to improve their digital literacy skills through innovative learning resources and promoting

awareness of the importance of digital skills in adults. Home - DigitALAD (digitaladproject.eu)

- The DRC project (Digital, Responsible Citizenship in a Connected World) aims to support teachers in developing a positive attitude towards digital citizenship and cultivating responsible, ethical, global citizens for a digitally, highly connected world. DRC – Digital Responsible Citizenship in a Connected World – Digital, Responsible Citizenship in a Connected World (digital-citizenship.org).

- The Digital Youth project aims to prepare youth workers to develop their skills and knowledge in order to be able to effectively engage in digital youth work Digital Youth – Preparing Youth Workers for a Digital World (digital-youth.eu).

- The 2B-DIGITAL aims at supporting the effective digital teaching and learning experience of VET teachers and learners, especially those at-risk of dropout and early leaving by adapting to the digital transition, magnified by COVID-19, in an attempt to avoid the increase of inequalities in education, and their consequent drift to youth unemployment and exclusion https://2bdigitalproject.eu/.

- The project ADULTDIGITALUP aims to support the Cypriot authorities to improve digital literacy of adults in Cyprus with a particular focus on adult educators and low-skilled adults https://adultdigitalup.eu/en/

References

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ICT CYPRUS REPORT 2021.pdf (ccs.org.cy)

Η Κύπρος στον Δείκτη Ψηφιακής Οικονομίας και Κοινωνίας | Shaping Europe's digital future (europa.eu)

http://www.moec.gov.cy/en/