



Digital Capabilities and Social Capital¹

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Abstract

This paper addresses the issue of the influence of social capital on the development of digital skills of children between 11 and 13 years. The reconceptualization of the term "social capital" and "digital skill" done by the "capabilities approach" of M. Nussbaum has allowed us to set up a research design focused on a survey to a sample of Italian families and a test for the evaluation of digital skills of children in order to develop an analytical and procedural model for the analysis of digital skills of children.

Keywords: Digital capabilities; social capital, first socialization, evaluation of digital skills

1. Introduction

Digital competence refers to a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes that the subject acquires through the relationship with the media during their life path and manages, in a more or less autonomous in the various contexts in which they can exercise their right citizenship in the era of digital convergence .

The competence is formed from early childhood when the child makes the first reports with the medium, or when media coverage reflects the experience of their parents (or agents of socialization).

The tendency of the subject to use the media is affected by capital from earliest childhood, or style of social relations, the interactions, the application of educational models compared to the stresses of the media agents of socialization; the latter will inevitably affect the genesis of the so-called " digital capabilities ", to use a concept developed by A. Sen and M. Nussbaum.

Is it possible that the intragenerational and intergenerational gap, even with respect to digital media, engage with their own roots in early childhood and that the socio-cultural capital represents a fundamental aspect for the orientation of the development of the skills of the child.

The objective of this paper is to deepen the possibility of connection between social capital of the so-called " cultural mediators " in the era of digital convergence and the development of attitudes and capabilities in the protagonists of the first socialization – children - in terms of digital skills (basic and cross) behind of the cultural behaviors, even outside of the direct relationship with the technologies .

The methodology involves the following steps:

1. Theoretical -conceptual analysis and mapping of digital skills

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2. Constructing a set of empirical indicators
3. Survey research : cultural attitudes, educational models, relational styles of the family.

2. The research design: objectives and working hypothesis

The present work aims to examine and deepen the relationship between family social capital , media styles and development of digital skills in early childhood.

The guiding hypothesis of this contribution is this: media styles that children acquire early in life are strongly influenced by their general context of life and socialization, in which the family is central to its social and cultural capital .

The equipment and access to technology are just some of the variables that affect the differences in media consumption of households and consequently of children. Therefore you need a deepening of the relationship dynamics within the family during media use, plus the analysis of educational models generally shared in the educational heritage of the parents, and the allocation and accessibility technological variables of different types, which combined various modes can cause behavioral profiles of cultural mediation to the medium that guide the behavior of the child with respect to the media and guide the development of meta- skills, basic way to use and interpret media languages .

The idea is to identify and test the key factors capable of mediating the differences in consumption socio- cultural and media consumption , hypothetically closely related to the ability of children to develop a range of skills (basic and destination) this could be particularly useful for their future inclusion in civil society as active, involved citizens, or in other words "to become a people " and be fully able to exercise their rights, as would Nussbaum (2000) .

2.1. Capabilities Approach of M. Nussbaum: a key to the analysis of social capital and digital skills

The construction of the theoretical-conceptual scheme of reference for the detection and analysis of skills can be developed by children between 11 and 13 years old, must be contextualized both at the macro level , compared to the characteristics of the socio- territorial Italian (in line with the ' idea to bring out any differences between the north, center and south, or between central or peripheral areas , etc. .) , both at the micro level, with respect to the definition and role of the family in Italy as a fundamental agency of socialization and cultural transmission .

Research in other countries on the relationship between family social capital , styles of media use and development of meta skills of children take in great consideration the economic variable as a factor that can influence in terms of quantity and quality of access , usage and media consumption , resulting in specific profiles.

In the Italian context, it should give greater weight to the role of the family and its ability to mediate social and cultural development and, consequently, to make a clear and precise conceptualization of the key concept of "social capital" that family , in our case, is a factor multidimensional relevance with respect to the construction of the media style of the children from the earliest years of life. Just the share capital of the family could have a profound effect on the ability of children to "get people ", or to develop what Nussbaum calls the " internal capabilities " designed as key skills (basic and cross) for the effective ability to take advantage of their rights, to exercise and to achieve well-being (the quality of life) , becoming part as " active citizen " in the era of digital convergence .

In this context, in order to build an analytical and procedural model for the analysis of digital competences, in this paper we attempt to perform two basic operations :

1. Re- define conceptually and operationally the concept of "social capital" , contextualizing it within a research aimed at analyzing the development of digital skills of children, within the perspective of A. Sen and M. Nussbaum.
2. Mapping a set of digital skills and the operational definition of the macro - variable "social capital " to a procedural analytical model for analysis of digital *capabilities* .

3. Capability and social capital

In this contribution we tried to reread the concept of "social capital" on the basis of "capabilities approach", introduced by M. Nussbaum to measure and evaluate the quality of life of a nation through the many and the different variables that can contribute to the composition of the quality of life of a context, past patterns of development focused primarily on GDP.

The intention is to adopt the approach and its fundamental concepts for the purposes of an investigation on the development of digital skills in early childhood contextualized within the socio-relational dynamics of the family.

Before Nussbaum, A. Sen had already developed a theoretical reflection on the centrality of the concept of "capability" to evaluate the growth and quality of life of nations in an environment of fairness and justice (Sen, 1992). Within this perspective, Sen had first used the concept of "capability" understood as "the ability to function" of a subject that must be combined with the ability to function, otherwise the availability of resources (material, relational, access) is not sufficient to give rise to the action.

Closely linked to the definition of operation is that of ability to function. It represents the various combinations of operations, and reflects the freedom of the individual to conduct a certain type of life rather than another.

The idea that we want to borrow from Sen and interesting to us for the purpose of this survey is that the conditioning of opportunity in the social, relational and cultural subjects in our field analysis of children with respect to their ability to develop the propensities personal information and to use effectively in the activities and behaviors.

M. Nussbaum takes up the thought of Sen and extends the "capabilities" approach, proposing a reading in our opinion adequate for the conceptualization and operational definition of family social capital, variable around which the research on styles and media development of digital skills shown here.

Specifically, taking the Nussbaum's approach, the concept of "social capital" of the family can be re-defined in terms of the total resources of socio-relational where a person (in this case, the parents of the family) has, jointly with its ability to benefit from it and then use it operationally.

The family social capital can therefore be reinterpreted in a perspective meso social and defined as a type of "combined capabilities", echoing the distinction introduced by Nussbaum between types of skills.

Martha Nussbaum defines capacity as "a set of opportunities to choose and act" and distinguishes between "internal capacity" and "combined capabilities", where the first indicates the characteristics and skills acquired and developed through interaction with the economic environment, social, family and political environment; while the latter are given by the sum of the internal capacities and socio-political-economic conditions in which these skills can be effectively exercised.

Therefore, taking the approach of Nussbaum, here we can redefine a meso perspective on family social capital as "the set of skills on the immaterial plane owned internally" by the person / parent (internal capacity) and, at the same time, the potential on the plane material available for the parent from the context in which it appears.

This definition seems, in our opinion, is particularly well adapted for the purposes of empirical research on the influence of the share capital of the families on the styles and media skills development in children, for the following reasons:

1. The concept of social capital can be interpreted from a perspective of meso social level appropriate to the unit of analysis of the family. This allows you to focus on while the micro-social perspective, which rotates on the increase in value from the parent of the actor-network of social ties on the basis of their social action (Coleman, 1988 and 1990) and the macro-focused on reciprocity, civic participation and trust widespread, as typical characteristics of specific geographical areas in which the family has declined and that offer a wealth of cultural traditions and values important (Putnam, 2000).

2. Social capital redefined as "combined capacity of the family" or "synthesis of the tangible and intangible aspects of the relationship between person (parents of the family) and context (geographical area and socio-economic and cultural life of the family)," permits its decomposition into operationally definable dimensions in individual and contextual variables in a procedural-analytic model for the empirical survey.

3. Social capital redefined as "combined capacity of the family" allows the detection and modeling complex family, who are able to relate types of families and types of digital skills can be developed by children. This third point is important in light of the general crisis of our country, the context in which it appears spatially and temporally our research and that cannot be taken into account in the context of investigation adopted. Is illuminating in this sense, the thought of Sen, that when you find yourself living conditions or events unsettling, new and critical, they often are accompanied by the collapse of the share capital, in the sense of "Stretched" of the social network and then the loss of relationships, resulting in a reduction of social support, their ability (their capabilities, according to Sen) and of their ability to act. Therefore, it is conceivable that it is not possible to imagine a society that produces combined capabilities (family patterns, lifestyles, and more specifically media styles) without producing internal capabilities (digital competence and meta skills of children).

4. The redefinition of social capital based on the Nussbaum's approach allows you to build an analysis model aimed at the detection of "capabilities" can be developed by the children and are designed as a foundation for the full exercise of their rights in a perspective of justice and equity.

4. Capability and skill

The approach based on "capability", according to M. Nussbaum, is based on the idea of "social minimum essential" as the base minimum required by respect for human dignity and focuses on human capabilities, that is to say about what people are really capable of doing and being, having as a model the intuitive idea of a life that is worthy of the dignity of a human being.

Nussbaum identifies a list of "fundamental human capabilities" in the context of a political liberalism that makes them just as many specific policy objectives that presents them in a manner free from any specific metaphysical foundation. In this way, the capacity may become a "subject of shared consensus" among people who otherwise have very different conceptions of what is good.

These skills, according to the author, should be pursued for each person individually, treating each as an end and not merely as means to ends of others; Nussbaum adopts a principle of "capacity individualized" based on the principle of the individual as an end. In the case of subjects such as women and children, who have often been treated and studied as a means for others (rather than as an end in its own right), this principle reveals a particular strength and critical analysis.

The approach uses the idea of "threshold level for each ability", the level below which it is believed that a true human functioning is not accessible to the subject; the social objective should therefore be understood as a way to overcome this capacity threshold to individuals. This concept of "threshold" is extremely interesting in research and analysis focused on the factors that can amplify (or reduce) the development of the capacities of children and the measurement and comparison between different levels of skills and meta- skills.

The acquisition of skills is a key issue for achieving the main goals of Europeans: the development of active citizenship and social inclusion, in that they involve the development of skills both "traditional", oriented on the notional size: as the mother tongue, foreign languages, basic skills in mathematics and science and digital, both transversal competences, such as learning to learn, social and civic competence, knowing how to take the initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and expression. These are certainly metacognitive nature and, therefore, more complex to integrate into a circuit formation, as they provide a design commitment and strategic by the educator, regardless of the context of socialization.

The available European post-Lisbon boosted the investment on lifelong learning and the key competencies, emphasizing especially those of cross-cutting nature that are poured on two perspectives: the metacognitive and the methodology. The first fact is strategic for autonomous and participatory orientation of the citizen with respect to flexibility and fragmentation of the contemporary context, the second is promoted through strategies and teaching methods focused on creativity and innovation (Brussels, 8-9 March 2007).

The term "Soft skills" therefore refers to a broad set of individual skills that are poured on the processes of cognition, the manner of behavior in social and professional contexts, on how and capacity for reflection and use of learning strategies and self-correction of his conduct.

This type of expertise includes some activities to be performed in front of a professional job (or not) :

- diagnosis (the situation , the task , the organizational role , the problem of himself) ;
- relationship with others to meet the demands of the situation;
- analysis of the specific requests (of the situation, the task, the problem of the role) ;
- Self-evaluation : reflections on their work and experiences in the professional and working life.

In this context, also the digital competence , in the Lisbon goals, has a double meaning, as it may present a basic (focused mainly on knowledge of codes media both from a technical standpoint that some critical) and cross (critical perspective) as an environment for creating and mediation for the development of other cultural fields .

On the basis of these considerations, it is possible to develop an analytical reasoning on the expertise from two perspectives: connected to the world of the younger generation that reflects the degree of embeddedness of the same from cultural behavior, and those related to the world of education as strategic intervention to address the linguistic and technological challenge and help to further implement the other key skills .

The cross nature of digital competence is translatable in the power of metacognition that has on young people, for the organization of content and structural content , as well as the particularity of language , cognitive and emotional processes by stimulating and facilitating reasoning and flexible lattice . The same production of content relies on the hybridization of codes and languages and forms of knowledge with knowledge from other cultural contexts and disciplines.

The importance of digital competence is also manifested in a methodological perspective , because the emotional connection facilitates the pursuit of methodological objectives of citizenship.

The perception of a relationship between the development of key skills and digital competences , justifies the interest for the analysis and empirical verification of the nature and intensity of these relationships and to test and evaluate their impact on the cognitive processes of new generations , often referred to generically as "digital natives".

5. Towards a procedural-analytic model for the analysis of digital capabilities in early childhood

An important goal of this research is to build a theoretical -conceptual model to be tested empirically and test to obtain a final analytical procedural model for the analysis of the development of digital skills in early childhood. It is an important goal, which addresses the need to provide a valid schema and generalizable to the theoretical and empirical analysis of the development of digital skills and key competences , in line with the directives of the Lisbon European Council (March, 2000), which has on several occasions and documents (see above) stressed the importance of investing in lifelong learning to cope with the new challenges of the knowledge society and digital convergence .

The operationalization of the model will allow the design and implementation of a survey research aimed at detecting and analyzing data that will provide information on familiar paths of media education , according to various modes of combination of individual and social variables proposed for the different types of media style of the family and the child and consequently to the different types of digital skills can be developed in early childhood).

The central key assumptions around which the model is that of the privileged link between social capital of families , styles, media and families of children and the development of key skills, and children . The dissolution of this " search node " through the instrumentation of survey research will enable the production of a series of data of interest to the scientific debate on the subject of the development of digital skills and their centrality within the systems of formal and informal education and education.

It will therefore be central to the model, the inclusion of a range of variables that can detect the educational models and life styles popular in Italian households , not neglecting the dimension of quality of life and well-being of families , a theme particularly relevant in the light the scenario of generalized crisis that has marked our country over the past years .

The capabilities approach provides, in conclusion, an interpretive perspective is particularly rich in insights and stress, allowing you to proceed in designing a plan of research on social capital and digital skills, able to overcome an approach certainly more frequent and longer used but based only on the actual resources of families and children.

The next goal of the research program, within which lies the theoretical and conceptual framework of reference that you have tried to illustrate in this paper, is to operationally define the concept of "social capital" and "skills" (with particular attention to those "digital") to proceed with the construction of data collection instruments and methodologically sound analysis in order to test empirically the types and levels of influence of family social capital on the styles and media development of meta skills of children.

On the basis of these considerations, the research design will include the following working steps:

- the construction of a general mapping of skills and, in particular, digital competences on the basis of theoretical references and illustrated the international literature reference;
- the design of a survey research on a sample of Italian family (resident representative regions of the north, center and south of Italy), respectively, with a semi-structured questionnaire to parents and an evaluation test of capabilities to the children (aged between 11 and 13 years) than in the adolescent phase should already possess a range of skills at various levels of maturity. The survey on parents will aim to detect and analyze data that will provide information on familiar paths of media education, according to various modes of combination of individual and social variables as possible, the different types of media style of the family and the child and consequently to different types of digital skills can be developed in early childhood. The assessment of the skills of the guys will be conducted with the goal of bringing the types and levels of maturity of the skills developed in socialization and growth paths conducted within the various family types.

The main expected result of this procedural logic is the construction of a matrix able to identify patterns of relationships between family members (family patterns), and types of skills and digital competences developed and developable by young children.

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