

The discourse of educational uses of digital technology: A critical analysis of the EU educational policy documents

Digitalization has become a central concern in education policy across Europe, with the EU and national policymakers vigorously promoting using digital technologies to enhance learning outcomes. Consequently, policy discourses about the edtech usually lack critical reflection with one-dimensional and enthusiastic representations of technology as pivotal for educational aims and goals, such as inclusive education, democratic citizenship, sustainable development, transformative education etc. Policy discourses about the edtech are far from being neutral and objective but are full of ideological and implicit meanings, conveying interests and agendas of certain social groups that often leave no alternate outcomes, which can hinder a meaningful use of digital technologies in education.

In the presentation, we will address this issue by presenting the results of research carried out as part of the project Education at the Frontiers of the Human: The Challenge of New Technologies, where we examined the discourses of edtech, with a particular focus on the discursive construction of its purposes, legitimation and evaluation in education. The first part will focus on the macro analysis with a presentation of results of a corpus-based analysis of selected European Commission documents about edtech, focusing on the general discursive representation of the digital technologies and social actors, using a hybrid method of corpus linguistics (Baker 2010) combined with van Leeuwen's model of Critical Discourse Analysis (van Leeuwen 2008). In the second part, we will present a case study involving a microanalysis of the language use in the European framework for the digital competence of educators (DigCompEdu), focusing on the relationship between the notion of digital competence and the role(s) of the teacher, using Verschueren's model of linguistic pragmatics (Verschueren 2011).

With a combination of macro and micro approaches, we will provide a comprehensive critical analysis of the discourse about edtech. We will offer insights into the discursive constructions of social practices and actors and highlight the importance of considering the ideological nature of language use. In this way, the presentation will intervene in the ubiquitous uncritical and self-evident ideological discourse that shapes actual policies of digitalization in education.

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