


SCHOOL DIGITAL CULTURE AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: PERSPECTIVES OF ACTIVE AND INTERDISCIPLINARY LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to show how the use of digital technologies can bring benefits to the teaching and learning process of students, promoting an active construction of knowledge in the discipline of Religious Education. This integration between school digital culture and religious education promotes a relevant intersection for learning and knowledge construction in the school environment through practical experiences in carrying out the activities proposed to students. The methodology adopted in this research is based on bibliographic references and on the daily experience of a teacher, who shares his didactic experiences related to the use of technologies. The main objective of this research is to verify how this teacher seeks to integrate the use of technology in the discipline of Religious Education. As results obtained, it was noted that digital technologies are essential for the active, participatory, and engaged development of the students to whom the classes are taught, thus building knowledge based on discoveries and research within the educational context of digital culture.

Keywords: Learning. Religious Education. Digital Technologies.

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INTRODUCTION

School Religious Education is a necessary discipline in learning spaces because it allows reflective actions on the existence of multiple religions in society. No one goes to school to learn a religion there, but rather to have the opportunity to learn the characteristics and values expressed in the religions that exist. Figueiredo (2011, p. 18) said that "Religious education, in addition to being an area of knowledge, having as a qualified tool a discipline that carries the subject that gave rise to it, occupies a significant role".

Certainly, this Religious Education teacher has the opportunity to dialogue with students, carrying out interdisciplinary work in the promotion of active, integral learning and with the ability to understand the religious diversities of the society where they live. Corroborating this way of thinking about interdisciplinary work, Silva and Silva (2020) state that through interdisciplinary activities, we can mediate teaching in a contextualized way and encourage students to search for updated information.

In addition, one way to boost this didactic-pedagogical practice with students is the introduction of the use of digital tools as research instruments and databases to record the main information acquired during research, studies and knowledge construction. This intersection between digital technologies and religious education tends to have an impact on the way we can study the contents that make up the curriculum of this discipline, with the use of enriching, attractive, and dynamic didactic resources for the school teaching and learning process.

Based on this principle, school research was carried out in Pirapetinga, in the interior of Minas Gerais – MG, to identify whether the teacher of Religious Education uses digital technologies in favor of the best development of his discipline in an interactive way. As a methodology used, the work was based on bibliographic references and a questionnaire, where the aforementioned professor³ recorded his main methodological actions as a result of the use of technologies. As main authors for the theoretical foundation of this work, we have: Brasil (2018), Burile, Veruck, and Teixeira (2021), De Paiva and Alves (2018), Figueiredo (2011), Page and Paiva (2021), Rocha, Ota and Hoffmann (2021) and Silva (2018 and 2020).

³ The questionnaire was applied to only one teacher, as he is the only one who works in the discipline of Religious Education in the city.

It is undeniable that after the COVID-19 pandemic, educational institutions turned their attention to the mixture of their planning with the use of digital technologies, as pointed out by De Paiva and Alves (2018, p. 4), "Technological advancement has redesigned the social movement, especially the way of sending and receiving information, of acting in society, of relating to nature and others". This digital culture that has been consolidating in schools has been demonstrating a transformative character for Education in general, not only for Religious Education classes. Given such facts, it cannot fail to mention that digital technologies offer difficulties in their use by teachers, due to the inability to use them personally and the absence of equipment in good condition.

In this way, it is noted that the respective research seeks to identify the existence of the use of digital technologies in the discipline of Religious Education, demonstrating how much digital culture can provide opportunities for interdisciplinary teaching, based on the construction of autonomous and active knowledge of students.

THE SCHOOL AND TEACHING PRACTICE

The school space is an environment that deserves attention from government officials, managers, and educators in general. Curricular subjects need to be taught in such a way that students can learn the information that is on the agenda, thus actively building their knowledge. For this to occur, educators need methodologies, teaching materials, activities and technological tools that provide student interaction in learning environments. As pointed out by Silva and Silva (2020, p. 58), "the school is an important place in the life of a citizen, in which he will seek knowledge, grow and develop skills that help in the search for social formation".

It is up to school managers and teachers to seek methodological and technological subsidies that bring students to the heart of the construction of knowledge, in an attempt to sharpen their interest in the contents that are being discussed in the classroom. Thus, Kenski (2013) states that,

The social insertion of these new technologies has occurred with the same speed and intensity with which they are offered, they are incorporated and discarded shortly after, replaced by something new, more powerful, and different, in multiple senses. The changes brought about by digital media transform our culture. (KENSKI, 2013, p. 61).

In the face of such technological and cultural changes, schools and teachers need to adapt to the new demands of society for the training of their students. School education no longer has the existence of a teacher who occupies the center of knowledge, being the propagator of knowledge, but rather a mediator capable of understanding the situation they experience, bringing in their hands the possibility of building knowledge, through the mediation of activities and the active search for information in books, digital platforms and primary sources on the subject studied.

This school professional, the teacher, needs to be aware of the existence of digital technologies and how much they can benefit from them for the construction of knowledge in their classes. This statement mentions the Religious Education teacher, who, together with the other teachers, can build an interdisciplinary work based on their activities and methodologies in the use of digital technologies, coming to observe the spaces to which they are structured, together with the school community in its social conditions.

Unquestionably, these digital technologies marked by digital culture have brought to the school environment the need for a methodological transformation to educators, who need to integrate them with their didactic content to disseminate knowledge through access to media vehicles. These contribute to the construction of knowledge, reflections on values and adaptive behaviors of the teaching and learning process of curricular subjects. Given this thought, Rocha, Ota, and Hoffmann (2021, p. 82), state that, "[...] It is important to overcome the idea that school spaces are restricted only to physical environments".

Furthermore, considering this statement, the digital culture has provided the opportunity to expand the horizons around education, through the dialogue between educators and students with new platforms of didactic content, where each Education professional needs to be aware of professional improvement to conduct their school activities. Another point of reflection regarding the professional improvement of educators is the observance of the mediation of the contents to the students so that they do not use information that deviates from the subjects that will be studied, thus avoiding an excessive acquisition of useless and superficial data existing on the Internet.

In the same way, these students live in a society where digital technologies are part of their daily lives, needing instructions and meditation so that they can obtain useful information for their learning. School activity will be intense for educators and students, from the moment they seek to take advantage of videos, online sites, blogs, and other digital tools to improve the process of teaching and learning didactic content. Corroborating

this thinking, Burile, Veruck, and Teixeira (2021) state that technologies provide multiple benefits, and can improve searches for current information through their proper use.

Naturally, when demonstrating to students the art of reflecting on Religious Education, each teacher needs to have knowledge about its content, appropriate methodologies, and the proper didactic resources they have to develop teaching in their curricular discipline. The pandemic advent of COVID-19 showed us that digital technologies were very useful in period of social isolation, bringing the school, teachers and students closer together, but also made it visible that social conditions prevented several students from not having the opportunity to carry out online activities, thus having their activities summarized in the handouts delivered, and/or, collected bimonthly for the necessary corrections.

In this same perspective, connecting Religious Education to the technological instruments of digital culture tends to offer the members of the teaching and learning process a greater educational dynamic, thus favoring the student protagonism of students, through the democratization of knowledge, accessibility to multisensory content, and the interactivity of didactic resources offered. The contents present in the Religious Education grid, when mediated by existing technological tools, can provide greater interactions between students involved in the teaching process, facilitating a more dynamic, active, and protagonist performance, thus being able to elaborate reflective and critical questions about the subject that is studied, as long as there is an appropriate methodological integration on the part of the teacher for the class in question.

Certainly, each teacher, when observing their experiences in the period of the COVID-19 Pandemic, needs to rescue common sense, first verifying the economic conditions of the school, its physical spaces, the existence of some technological equipment, and the socioeconomic conditions of the students so that they can build their didactic-pedagogical practices and activities in the school environment. As pointed out by Rocha, Ota, and Hoffmann (2021, p. 95), "Digital information and communication technologies (DICTs) have presented teachers with these challenges, making the acquisition of skills to use new technologies essential for the learning process".

Therefore, it is noted that the school and teachers need to be attentive to the actions in teaching, bringing opportunities to students for the construction of knowledge that transforms the classroom into a space that is worth being there, living with each other, and actively playfully building the learning process, using, when possible, digital technologies.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this research work was based on the importance of digital technologies in the teaching and learning process of students in their learning spaces, including in the discipline of Religious Education. This research took place in a school in the city of Pirapetinga, in the interior of Minas Gerais – MG. In addition, authors who supported the work through their bibliographic references on the study involving digital technologies and Religious Education were used. Finally, a Questionnaire was applied to a Religious Education teacher, which was essential for the understanding of this research. This is presented here in a discursive way.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

The school is a learning environment aimed at the full formation of the student who attends there. It is not enough for the student to develop his numerical and linguistic skills, but to have knowledge that helps him to live harmoniously in society. This social experience will require cultural, physical, mathematical, and religious knowledge from the student in question. Based on this principle, Religious Education constitutes an essential discipline in the life of the human being in society.

Furthermore, we are not here, basing our writing on ideologies aimed at learning religion in the school environment, if this is appropriate to family care and teaching. This school's religious education was resignified over time, undergoing a pedagogical restructuring that would meet the current society. As pointed out by Silva (2018, p. 62), "The model of Religious Education, from the perspective of Religious Sciences, defended by FONAPER (National Permanent Forum of Religious Education), that is, religious knowledge as a heritage of humanity (...)", thus coming to belong to the globalized universe to which we belong in the twenty-first century. This author also says that Religious Education needs,

[...] Expressing content and dialogues with different religious and non-religious matrices is a radical break with the model of catechesis, which defends Christian-based RE, of uncritical, apolitical, and monocultural reflection. The theological conception is also based on the principles of Christianity, with different religious matrices, but it is a theological model of consensus, that is, it is aimed at spreading morality, Christian ethics, and citizenship. (SILVA, 2018, p. 62).

This modern thinking about religious education demonstrates necessary changes for the greater involvement of students in the discipline and the practice of activities that

enable interdisciplinary work with other curricular units. The curriculum of Religious Education needs to contain social, cultural, ethical, and political values, that confront the old contentist practices of the old Religious Education, and the teaching of religion does not fit. To Silva (2018, p. 62), "The BNCC appears in educational policy as something neutral, necessary, inevitable, since it would meet the interests of all social segments".

In practice, we well know that neither the National Common Curricular Base (2018) nor the curriculum is neutral, framing content choices in the respective grades, with emphasis on certain subjects and the removal of others. In the Southeast region, especially in Minas Gerais, Junqueira, Corrêa, and Holanda (2007) state that,

About RE in this State, we highlight two important legislations: Resolution 465, of December 18, 2003, and Opinion 489, approved on June 23, 2004. [...] and introduces the terminology Religious Education, by understanding it as a mandatory subject in the elementary school curriculum, in the normal opening hours of public schools in Minas Gerais, ensuring respect for the religious cultural diversity of Brazil, prohibiting any form of proselytism, with enrollment being optional for the student (art. 1). (JUNQUEIRA, CORRÊA and HOLANDA, 2007, p. 92).

From this principle, it is up to the teacher to benefit from his knowledge to conduct his classes using digital technologies to complement what is in the planning of studies. With the use of the Internet and digital tools, we can create multiple activities involving didactic content, in our case, Religious Education content, thus allowing students to use online platforms, videos, and social networks, managing to acquire research sources that help them in the construction and reflection of their knowledge.

Additionally, we see that in addition to creating new spaces for studies and research outside the classrooms, this democratization of information offers a plurality of data that transforms the knowledge produced by students, increasing the prospects for debates with the enrichment of interdisciplinary and interreligious dialogues. Corroborating this assertion, Rocha, Ota, and Hoffmann (2021, p. 25) state that "The current context associated with the pandemic has redefined the value of the school, the classroom, and even the teacher", demonstrating that didactic-methodological-pedagogical routines and proposals need to be rethought through the use of new technologies and the installation of Digital Culture.

This integration between digital culture and religious education has strengthened access to religious information and the emergence of a range of innovative pedagogical resources to deepen the debates around the curricular contents of the discipline. The more

we raise the levels of knowledge (and critical debates) on a given subject, in this case, "Religious Education", the better will be the construction of knowledge, engagement, respect, and ethics around the subject mobilized in the classroom.

In addition, taking into account the answers to the questionnaire filled out by teacher "X", it is noted that during his work in the classroom, the use of technologies has moved the classes, bringing benefits to the discussions of religious education contents. When asked about "What is the importance of technologies for Religious Education classes?", we obtained, for example, the following answer:

The internet has democratized, connected and shared information and experiences lived in the classroom through the construction of knowledge. With digital platforms, games, and videos, we were able to bring students closer to virtual communities, obtaining an interesting return for their engagement in the development of activities. These are opportunities created that challenge the traditional work methodologies that we already know, "forcing" us, teachers, to further improve our skills to be able to work with new technologies and with the students who live in this globalized environment (TEACHER'S ANSWER).

In the second question, "What are the biggest challenges you face to promote dialogue among students in the discipline of Religious Education?", the teacher answered, "Today, disinformation and hatred because if I am uninformed, I automatically promote the dissemination of hatred wherever I go.

Another challenge is to help students have a repertoire of reliable sites/sources to carry out their research". This digital culture has brought with it these challenges to educators in teaching, as they need to reflect on the implications that may result from the research carried out, based on activities that are guided by morality and ethics in religious contexts.

Undoubtedly, this digital culture and its technologies used in the teaching and learning process require a strategy and methodologies that contribute to the preparation of students to use them responsibly and critically, aiming to promote an interdisciplinary and religious dialogue that aims to combat the intolerance that exists in sociocultural contexts. Access to the Internet offers students contact with information about different cultures and their ways of worshipping in society, aiming at building respect for diversity, tolerance, and a fair dialogue between the ways of professing faith.

In addition, the aforementioned Religious Education teacher pointed out the eight most used digital tools in his classroom discipline. These tools are essential for the execution of their activities at school, where they seek to acquire information, engage

students and improve the learning process of didactic content relevant to their discipline of Religious Education. Table 1 shows the most used tools for the elaboration and development of school activities:

Table 1 – Technological tools most used by Religious Education teachers

Google Maps	Google Docs	Computers	Personal Cell Phones
Whatsapp	Google Search	Google Photos	Drive

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Among the physical technologies, we find the computer in the media room, cell phones that are for the teacher's personal use and students' devices. It is noted that the aforementioned teacher uses WhatsApp for the fastest communications and necessary notices, along with some Google tools for the development of texts, research and photos for the assembly of works on the topics that were proposed in the classroom. As Page and Paiva (2021, p. 3) point out, "Google tools emerge as a subterfuge to soften the distances between students and teachers, not allowing students to be completely disconnected from interaction with teaching".

Certainly, these digital technologies offer a range of possibilities that transform the religious education studied in school environments, making them more dynamic, pleasurable, autonomous, dynamic and meaningful for students who have the opportunity to build their knowledge based not only on the textbook, but also on websites, blogs, videos, games, which are contained in virtual environments. Corroborating this perspective between technology and the meaning of its use in the learning process, Rocha, Ota, and Hoffmann (2021) state that,

The offer of content organized in a proposal of a discipline enables the development of autonomy, because, although the selection of content is already made, the student can choose the order of the resources on which he wants to study, having the possibility to choose whether he prefers to start with reading, the challenge, the tips, the video or another study tool. People need to develop skills to make sense of information, to perceive the difference between what is important and what is not, and above all, to combine the many fragments of information into a broad picture of the world. (ROCHA, OTA and HOFFMANN, 2021, p. 67).

Then, the Religious Education teacher indicates that technological tools can bring greater dynamism among students to his classes. According to the professor, technology has expanded his classroom, being able to take students to the media room and thus find on online maps the headquarters of the main religions on the planet, their culture, dogmas

and ways of thinking. He also mentions that he manages to work on the need for ethics, diversity and the tolerance necessary for the survival of peoples.

Additionally, this Religious Education teacher points out that digital technologies can facilitate interdisciplinary work with other disciplines such as History, Science, Geography and Portuguese, being able to integrate the disciplines involved through research, platforms and photos through the technologies mentioned in table 1. As can be seen, the integration between digital culture and religious education is clear, facilitating interdisciplinary study, research on new forms of religiosity in society, student engagement, and the development of skills.

It is the digital culture bringing to the educators of Religious Education the possibility of proposing activities that develop the student's autonomy, the monitoring of the sociocultural changes generated by religions on the planet and the democratization of knowledge about the contents to be studied in the disciplinary grid. It is up to the teacher educator to integrate teaching methodologies with existing technologies, such as blogs, websites, wikis, videos and video production, podcasts, videoconferences, game applications, simulations and, more currently, generative artificial intelligence tools, to promote critical and reflective debates with the student as the protagonist of the learning process.

Therefore, it is noted that technological tools are necessary for the teaching and learning process, even after the social isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The work carried out by the aforementioned teacher of Religious Education reflects actions that are necessary today, where digital technologies are contained in the curricular planning of the discipline, thus making the digital culture strengthen the actions of the school daily life in the promotion of curricular learning.

CONCLUSION

Religious education at school is an optional subject, where the student and his family decide whether it is important to fulfill their hours or not. In the twenty-first century, we can no longer confuse Religious Education with Theological Education/Religion, thus requiring profound changes in the curricula that make up the discipline.

Undeniably, with the sociocultural evolution, each teacher who takes on this discipline of Religious Education to teach their classes, needs to prepare with diverse content on the subject, so as not to produce embarrassment and practice religious *bullying*

with the students present, in addition to having a minimum knowledge of technology and expanding their questions through digital culture.

Therefore, Religious Education is present in our classrooms, but it is necessary to have teachers who can train and who can promote interdisciplinary work during the school year in their school, with the use of digital technologies and the participation of colleagues from other subjects in the school curriculum.

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