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Digital capability within social work with adults: Technical report
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Exchange of Good Practices



ASIDE

Adult **S**ocial Inclusion in a **D**igital **E**nvironment

DIGITAL CAPABILITY WITHIN SOCIAL WORK WITH ADULTS

TECHNICAL REPORT

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<http://aside.inbie.pl/>

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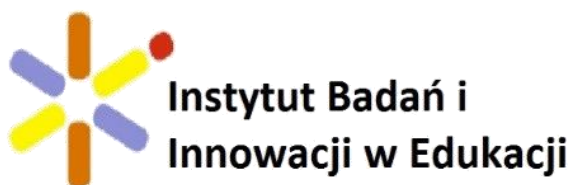
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DIGITAL CAPABILITY WITHIN SOCIAL WORK WITH ADULTS

Introduction

Information technology (IT), with its ever-growing role in public administration, represents the new system of public services (Dunleavy, Margetts, Bastow i Tinkler, 2006) with innovative use of the Internet and social media networks in public administration (Andersen, Medaglia i Henriksen, 2012; Margetts i Dunleavy, 2013). In the context of the digitization of the public sector and public services, the concept of 'public values' has become a central concept, as evidenced by the recent increase in public administration and e-government research (Bannister i Connolly, 2014 ; Cordella i Bonina, 2012) and IT systems research (Rose et.al., 2015). In the literature on the subject, a study based on literature review and a study of heads of Danish local authorities is known and described. In this study, Rose et.al. (2015) synthesizes a framework of four key values for e-government: *professionalism, efficiency, service and commitment*. The study authors point out that some examples of the values associated with these items may be "congruent" or "divergent." Among other features, "congruent" cases are causal or synergistic, while "divergent" cases are competing or negating. They also recommend the use of value position frameworks in future empirical research, with particular regard to several groups of entities, as well as specific technologies.

In the review of the literature on artificial intelligence (AI) in the public sector, Wirtz et.al. (2018) described two types of AI: advanced AI and limited AI. This diversity resembles the traditional "AI" view of strong or weak (Searle, 1980). Limited artificial intelligence includes, for example, structural programming or automated decision making. In this article, we use the terms automatic decision making along with Robotic Process Automation (RPA), as described by Willcocks et.al. (2017). According to their definition of "RPA" includes tools such as macros and scripts that provide functionality in a long office environment (Ochoa Siguencia et.al, 2019; Gródek-Szostak et.al. 2018). Even in the most advanced form, "RPA" can be seen as weak artificial intelligence, but nevertheless it represents fundamental changes in the organizational context (Wirtz i in., 2018). Automated decision making in the public sector is based on algorithms of varying complexity (Bayamlıoğlu i Leenes, 2018).

Other research results presented in the literature focus on the direct experience of social workers. Curry et. al. (2017) found that experienced social workers viewed the online childcare recommendation system more negatively than less experienced social workers. Experienced social workers have complained about the loss of direct contact with the client and the time needed to learn the system. The literature richly documented research focusing on the introduction of platforms for documenting management processes in childcare and social welfare. (Devlieghere et.al., 2018; Devlieghere, Roose,

2018; Hansen et.al., 2018). These studies show that standardized processes can promote transparency, but social workers can use the recommended text boxes in a new way or use alternative contact channels to obtain information not provided by the system (Devlieghere, Roose, 2018). While Hansen et.al (2018) stated that communication through technology does not necessarily replace direct meetings with clients. Although some clients preferred impersonal online contact, others (with more complex contacts with the agency) combined digital and traditional communication modes. The use of technology in social services is a multidimensional research area. However, research is limited in detailed empirical research on the impact of digitization and automated decision making on social workers who manage cases in practice.

The essence of social policy

The vision of social policy resulting from the statements of parliamentary, government and senior state officials is a very interesting subject of the study (Table 1).

Table 1. Social policy - selected definition

Lp.	Author	Definition
1.	Marshall (1967)	Government policy regarding activities that directly affect the well-being of citizens by providing them with services or income.
2.	Pierson (1998)	In a narrow sense, welfare state may refer to state instruments for the provision of social services (often limited to health care, education, housing, income maintenance and personal social services). In a broader sense, welfare state is considered to be (1) a special kind of state, (2) a separate form of system (politics), (3) a specific type of society ... in which the state intervenes in the processes of economic reproduction and distribution in order to reallocate life opportunities between individuals and / or social classes
3.	Spicker (1995)	Provision of social services by the state; a strategy for the development of interrelated services provided in the event of a wide range of social problems; an ideal in which services are provided to the full extent and at the best possible level
4.	Gans (1975)	Any proposal of thoughtful activity that is supposed to affect the operation of society or any of its parts. In fact, a social adjective is not necessary, because any policy affecting more than one person is social. A characteristic feature of social policy is its focus on what can be called programmatic rationality; it strives to achieve real goals through instrumental action programs whose effectiveness can be proven logically or empirically. On the other hand, political activity by its very nature emphasizes

		political rationality, where political goals such as keeping the party in power have priority.
5.	Gil (1992)	<p>Social policies are guiding principles of lifestyles, motivated by basic and realized human needs. They are derived by people from the structures, dynamics and values of their ways of life and are used to maintain or change them. Social policies are usually but not necessarily codified as formal and legal instruments. All social policies existing in a given society and at a given time constitute an interconnected, yet not necessarily an internally coherent system of social policies. Social policies operate through the following essential institutional processes and their multidimensional interactions: development, management and conservation of natural and man-made resources; organization of work and production of tangible and intangible goods and services supporting and improving life; exchanging and distributing life-enhancing goods and services, as well as social, civic and political rights and obligations; governance and its validation; reproduction, socialization and social control.</p> <p>Through policies and interactions between these essential institutional processes, social policies shape the following related output variables of lifestyles: the living conditions of individuals, groups and classes; authority of individuals, groups and classes; the nature and quality of relations between individuals, groups and classes; overall quality of life.</p>

Source: own study

Discourses from various levels or dimensions intertwine, and scientific definitions are used in practice to resolve conflicts of interest and to dismiss or accept claims. An example here is the definition used by the Constitutional Tribunal in judgments regarding social security - it is "a system of devices and benefits to meet the justified needs of citizens who have lost or suffered a restriction of their ability to work, or have been overburdened with costs of maintaining a family" (judgment of the Constitutional Tribunal K 17/92, OTK 1993/2/33).

As an academic definition, it may have didactic functions or direct the attention of researchers alongside many others, but as a basis for adjudication on the conformity of legislation to the Constitution, it seems too narrow. In its light, 25 persons who had justified needs but were able to work and were not overburdened with the costs of maintaining a family were excluded from the scope of subjective social security. On this basis, any claims for benefits from social security or social assistance for persons able to work and without a family, e.g. single unemployed, would be unfounded (Szarfenberg, 2002).

Social Services – specifics

The scientific literature and normative documents lack one universally accepted definition of social services. Their classifications are also different - they use different criteria, hence their ambiguity and inability to compare directly. Most authors, despite adopting various criteria, describe as "social" services that are directed to or related to a human individual, with a direct satisfaction of human needs, and their purpose is to positively influence the people who use them. These services are referred to as "social" - also because of the origin of a specific community or its representatives (local government or state) and their financing from public funds (Janoś-Kresło, 2002).

Table 2. The essence of social services

Lp.	Author	Definition
1.	Szatur-Jaworska (2008)	Services are activities undertaken to directly meet human needs and do not involve the production of material goods; they serve the satisfaction of individual needs of individuals and families, although their quality and accessibility affects the functioning of wider communities and social groups; they can be financed, organized and provided by both public and non-public institutions - private; are obtained on an equivalent basis, partly against payment or fully against payment.
2.	Wańkiewicz (2004)	This is a group of services related to so-called soft areas of life
3.	Hermann (2010)	They are an expression of solidarity, are addressed to people with limited opportunities to participate in public and economic space. They are an important factor of social integration, they aim at the best adaptation to the needs of the individual, building trust and maintaining it. Social services are multifaceted: on the one hand, they build bonds and communication between society and the individual, on the other - they contribute to meeting various needs.

Source: own study

Table 3. Constitutive features of social policy [polityka społeczna vs polityka socjalna]

Types of features - questions	social - in a civic context	social - as financial help for someone
What does it concern?	It shapes the general working and living conditions of the population, desirable social structures and social (interpersonal) relations	Helps to meet basic life needs, such as work, income, food, housing, healthcare, education, people-to-people contacts, etc.
Who is affected by	It applies to all population groups - the whole society	It mainly concerns the so-called social risk groups, i.e. the poor, the sick, the disabled, the unemployed, the old and those

		living in incomplete, large families, pathological etc.
What is the purpose?	It seeks to meet the needs of the population at the social optimum level	It seeks to equalize opportunities in the development of individuals, families and environments, and to meet the needs, at least at the level of social minimum
What resources does it use?	Full-size set: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection pillars (techniques): care, insurance and supply • Measures: economic, legal, information, human resources, space and time 	A reduced and strictly targeted (need to meet certain criteria) set of measures. For social security limited to pillars (technician): caring and insurance

Source: Piątek, 2012, pp. 115–116

Social services as an economic category, on the one hand, and as a tool for an economizing social policy, on the other, are the interface between instruments activating welfare state and activities in the area of social economy.

Table 4. Objectives, functions and method of organizing social services according to the European Commission

Objectives, functions of social services	The organization of the provision and financing of social services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • these are person-oriented services designed to meet the life needs of people, especially the needs of vulnerable groups in society; provide protection against general and specific threats to life and help to meet personal challenges and crisis; they are also provided to families in the context of changing family patterns, supporting their role in caring for young and older family members as well as disabled people, and compensating for possible family breakdown; they are key instruments for protecting fundamental human rights and human dignity; • they play a preventive role and integrate socially all members of the population, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meeting the multiple needs of individual entities requires the versatility and personalization of social services, which must be developed and provided in an integrated manner; often there is a personal relationship between the recipient of the service and the service provider; • when defining and providing the service, the variety of recipients must be taken into account; • social services provided to meet the needs of vulnerable groups are often characterized by an asymmetrical relationship between service providers and beneficiaries, different from the relationship between the commercial

<p>regardless of their status or income;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contribute to combating discrimination, ensuring gender equality, improving living conditions and creating equal opportunities for all, thereby increasing the ability of individuals to participate fully in society. 	<p>supplier and the consumer;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • due to the fact that these services are often embedded in (local) cultural traditions, solutions tailored to the specific features of the local situation are chosen, guaranteeing closeness between the service provider and the user, while ensuring equal access to services throughout the territory; • service providers often need a lot of autonomy to meet different and changing social needs; • as a rule, these services are based on the principle of solidarity and rely heavily on public funding, which ensures equal access, regardless of ownership or income; • non-profit service providers and volunteer workers often play an important role in providing social services, thus expressing citizenship and contributing to social integration, social cohesion of local communities and intergenerational solidarity.
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Source: EC Communication Services of general interest, including social services of general interest: a new European commitment, COM (2007) 725 final, pp. 7-8.

The concept contained in the table is normative, i.e. it indicates the objectives of social services, similar to the concept of Qu / A / Si II. New elements include taking into account the needs of "vulnerable groups in society", highlighting anti-discrimination and equality potential. The first thread is related to the issue of asymmetry of the relationship between the service provider and the recipient, most obvious in care services, which, together with public financing and the lack of a profit motive, clearly places social service entities outside the market context (Szarfenberg, 2014).

Methodology

Digital capability needs to be embedded in all social care settings and conversations; from the lecture halls of universities, to the conversations happening with individuals about how digital services can support their care, and the social work organisations making decisions on both a local and national scale.

The study used triangulation of research methods including: literature analysis, questionnaire, qualitative content analysis. Random sampling was used to ensure a representative sample with high external validity.

Research and Innovation in Education performer the desk analysis on the current literature by analysing online databases and selected scientific journals, focusing on project and initiative promoted by **Adult Social Inclusion in a Digital Environment**. The desk analysis was based on PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) methodology. INBIE collected statistic data only by official sources and scientific surveys. For the field research we used the survey method, The questionnaire was part of the ASIDE questionnaire passed to 120 Adult educators. From this, only 57 were validated.,.

Sampling was conditioned by the availability of data. Table 1 depicts the accumulated data on the respondents within the ASIDE Project survey, which took place from February 1st till March 31st 2020. The survey was conducted through Google Forms platform and it was conducted within public and private adult education centers, training centers and vocational trainings centers in the Silesian region - Poland. As the descriptive data shows the respondents were almost evenly distributed in terms of gender. Furthermore, the accumulated data illustrates that the majority of the surveyed institutions were Public and the training centers were accounted for almost 50 % from the total number of 57 respondents within ASIDE survey.

Table 1: Characteristics of the ASIDE project respondents in the Silesian region - Poland

N = 57	N=29	N=28
Gender	Males	Females
Level of Education	Bachelor=35	Master=7 PhD=14
Type of ownership	Public= 46	Private=11
Type of the Institution	Adult education=15 center	Training Center=30 Vocational Training=12

For tables 2-7 we have applied 5-Likert scale measurements in order to identify and measure the level of digital skills of the educators and learners in the ASIDE project.

Research findings

In table 2 are presented the levels of professional engagement of the educators and learners, whereas there are five levels (the use of digital technologies to enhance organizational communication is level 1, the use of digital technologies to engage knowledge and experiences is level 2, individually reflect on, critically assess and actively develop one's own digital pedagogical practice and that I individually reflect on, critically assess and actively develop one's own digital pedagogical practice and that of one's educational community is level 3 and the use of digital sources and resources for continuous professional development is level 4. Table 2 depicts explicitly that all levels of engagement are high of the educators and learners as the use of digital technologies drives this commitment.

Table 2: Level of Professional Engagement of the educators and learners

Min	1	1	1	1
Max	5	5	5	5
Avg.	4,09	4,11	3,54	4,12
Median	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00
StDev	0,99	0,92	1,00	0,95

Source: own elaboration

Table 3 is devoted to the digital resources for teaching and learning, which are applied within the adult education in the Silesian region. The results show that there is a need for improvement here as the extend of digital resources usage is under the average. This is explain by the facts that there is a need for more identifying, assessing and selecting of digital resources for teaching and learning, creation or introduction of more concrete new digital educational resources and more robust organizing of digital content and making it available for the educators and learners in the Silesian region.

Table 3: Digital Resources for teaching and learning

Min	1	1	1
Max	5	5	5
Avg.	3,98	2,72	2,74
Median	4,00	3,00	3,00
StDev	0,95	1,32	1,29

Source: own elaboration

Table 4 illustrates the planning for and implement digital devices and resources into the teaching process, so as to enhance the effectiveness of teaching interventions, the use of digital technologies to offer timely and targeted guidance and assistance for the learners and the educators, the use of digital technologies to foster and enhance learner collaboration and the use of digital technologies to support self-regulated learning processes, for example to enable learners to plan, monitor and reflect on their own learning, provide evidence of progress, share insights and come up with creative solutions. Table 4 clearly depicts the necessity for boosting implementation of digital gadgets and resources among the learners and educators in the Silesian region.

Table 4: Teaching and Learning

Min	1	1	1	1
Max	5	5	5	5
Avg.	3,33	3,70	3,54	3,26
Median	3,00	4,00	4,00	3,00
StDev	1,26	1,12	1,21	1,14

Source: own elaboration

Table 5 is related to the use digital technologies for formative and summative assessment, generating, selecting, critically analyzing and interpreting of the digital evidence on learner activity, performance and progress, in order to inform teaching and learning and the use of digital technologies to provide targeted and timely feedback to learners. Based on table 5 the assessment of teaching in adult's education in the Silesian region is sufficient, but still low in terms of formative and summative digital advancement.

Table 5: Assessment of Teaching

Min	1	1	1
Max	5	5	5
Avg.	3,58	3,32	3,58
Median	4,00	3,00	4,00
StDev	1,25	1,26	1,07

Source: own elaboration

Table 6 shows the so called empowering Learners by providing of accessibility to learning resources and activities, for all learners, including those with special needs, the usage of

digital technologies to address learners' diverse learning needs, by allowing learners to advance at different levels and speeds, follow individual learning pathways and goals, and the use of digital technologies to foster learners' active and creative engagement. Based on table 6 results, we can state that there is need of higher level of social inclusion in adult education in the Silesian region.

Table 6: Empowering Learners

Min	1	1	1
Max	5	5	5
Avg.	3,42	3,38	3,50
Median	4	3	4
StDev	1,30	1,11	1,18

Source: own elaboration

Table 7 illustrates the facilitating learners' digital competences as important step towards incorporating of learning activities, assignments and assessments which require learners to articulate information needs, incorporating of learning activities, assignments and assessments which require learners to effectively and responsibly use digital technologies for communication, collaboration and civic participation, incorporating assignments and learning activities which require learners to express themselves through digital means, taking measures to ensure learners' physical, psychological and social wellbeing while using digital technologies and incorporating of learning and assessment activities which require learners to identify and solve technical problems or to transfer technological knowledge creatively to new situations. Based on table 7, we can outline that the digital competence among the learners in adults education in the Silesian region is moderately developed, as still improvements are needed in order to reach the solid level of minimum 4 out of 5.

Table 7: Facilitating Learners' Digital Competence

Min	1	1	1	1	1
Max	5	5	5	5	5
Avg.	3,46	3,49	3,33	3,61	3,61
Median	4	4	3	4	4
StDev	1,13	1,10	1,26	1,06	1,10

Source: own elaboration

Based on the results in the tables 2-7, it could be outlined that even though most of the values on digital competences are around the average, still the adult education in Poland shows potential for improvement. This means that the necessity for implementation and promoting of more digital tools and techniques in adult education is essential for the effective and efficient enhancing of digital skills and competences along with social inclusion in the Silesian Region. Thus, EU digital competences and social inclusion in adult education need to be rolled out and disseminated across Silesian Region in order to increase the quality of learning and teaching in the area of adult education regardless the type of institution, which provides the respective education.

Conclusion

This report has been implemented by researchers from different fields, countries and Institutions collaborating with Research and Innovation in Education Institute [INBIE] and present one way how to understand “digital capability within social work with adults”. More information about the project can be found in the webpage of the project: <http://aside.inbie.pl>.

Adult Social Inclusion in a Digital Environment [ASIDE project] promote:

- to exchange good practices between organizations active in social education and social inclusion
- to increase the competencies of Digital social educators
- to define a basic portfolio of competences for social educators and social volunteers in digital social inclusion practices at European level
- to create a comprehensive (and commented) list of topics and practices essential for digital social inclusion initiatives/activities
- to create a network active in digital social inclusion.

The following aspects has been presented in the technical report:

- levels of professional engagement of the educators and learners
- digital resources for teaching and learning, which are applied within the adult education
- planning for and implement digital devices and resources into the teaching process
- use digital technologies for formative and summative assessment, generating, selecting, critically analyzing and interpreting of the digital evidence on learner activity
- empowering Learners by providing of accessibility to learning resources and activities, for all learners, including those with special needs, the usage of digital technologies to address learners' diverse learning needs
- facilitating learners' digital competences as important step towards incorporating of learning activities, assignments and assessments which require learners to articulate information needs

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Further reading

More detailed discussion of referencing conventions is to be found in the following publications:

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