

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA UPON SOCIALIZATION OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM Z GENERATION

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Abstract: *This article announces the ongoing empirical research of the public reverberation of the social media upon the socialization of representatives from Z generation. Hereto, we humbly discuss fundamental issues and concepts of the process of “socialization”, social media, digital natives and digital immigrants; lay arguments about the educational need of outlining an uniform concept on the issues and theoretical materialization of the co-relation "social media - socialization"; objectified is a small percentage of the conceptual requisite necessary for this diagnostic research.*

Keywords: *socialization, education, social media, digital natives, tradigital*

“I love people, that’s why I love social media.”

Gary Vaynerchuk

Since the dawn of time, mankind is interested in its prosperity and wellbeing in order to preserve and protect itself from entropy. All too aware of their key role for survival and development of the new generations, the adult individuals of all societies and cultures felt responsible for taking care and dealing with a serious challenge—adequate and successful securing of continuity and passing forward of all accumulated civilization capital, human experience, rich culture and abundance of

values necessary for providing welfare and prosperity. The education has an emphatic role for the transfer of the lifetime wisdom and knowledge from past to future generations. Education, but not in its mere mechanical accumulation of data, facts, knowledge and literacy but as an overall mastering and grasping of this knowledge, as the inspirational growth of perceptions and deep molding of erudite, structured, honorable, engaged and motivated individuals for the long run, who would be able to skillfully rise above themselves and increase their immanent potential and ambivalence; education, as the extraordinary art of the conscious and responsible existence of man, of nurturing fundamental human values and philanthropy in every member of society; education as the inner strive and sensory ability to outline the finest and vaguest nuances not the just the black and white two-dimensionality. Driven by the natural desire for perfection Homo Sapiens, on one hand, purposefully and involuntarily changes the continuum they exist in (increasing mobility, developing of language skills, virtual reality, distance learning, artificial intelligence etc.), and on the other hand, thus expanding the social world to infiniteness. In the context of this persistently, speeding dynamics with unrelenting accelerated pulse, the man constantly continues to seek sustainable harmony and symmetry in their days. The process of socialization is the structural guarantee for achieving such a balance.

For over 120 years, the problem of socialization has been studied in depth, as evidenced by the multiple concepts and accepted fundamental approaches about the essence of the socialization, such as **notion** and **process** (Durkheim, Simmel, Dubar, Habermas, Freud, Erikson, Parsons, Thomas, Мид). The research of many scholars contribute for compiling a rich collection of eloquent, descriptive and exhaustive insights to help the young researchers, who demonstrate scientific curiosity for verification of existing theories in modern times. Out of all available interpretations regarding the **stages** of socialization (Паригин, Андреев, Глински), outlined were broad parameters for argumentative interpretations resulting in serious complications for defining strict boundaries between different stages of socialization, due to the original polyvalence of subjective peculiarities in personal development. Unlike all of them, the relevant analysis of the most detailed theoretical formulations about the **mechanisms** for socialization (Strausse, Мардахаев, Мудрик), outlines a number of similarities with almost insignificant essential differences that enhance the conviction and understanding that the mechanisms for socialization are defined primarily by the psychological peculiarities of man and his interaction with the spatial vastness of society. The unanimously accepted **factors** of socialization (Смелзер, Шариков, Мардахаев, Мудрик, Немов, Леонтьев) are: family, with the strongest influence of mother and father, followed by other family members and kin at a later stage; school, whose influence strongly competes with that of the family; coevals – filling in the strive for communication with equals; the street and mass media.

Due to changes in society, the indicated factors or rather their influence also suffered metamorphosis. Some of the factors described in the literature, which at some time have been undoubtedly leading, today have a recessive influence, unlike others which have gained greater influence and acquired rich nuances. These dynamic changes in the factors certainly awake scientific interest and shed a light on new tendencies for proliferation of the process of socialization and its redefinition.

With an eye to the efficient and adequate socialization of modern, school age generations, “the new age” of evolution of mankind with its new technologies and social media requires and even demands modernization of the educational system as well. The partial reorganization of the educational system combining proven and well-tested traditional methods with other forms and training methods that adequately reflect the specifics and peculiarities of nowadays generation of students (Berk), would lead to the necessary consonance between the modern requirements of contemporary society and the educational targets. It is too unsound to have modern educational professionals who are inert or uninterested in the digital social vivarium, whereas more and more digital natives film the social, professional and personal aspects of their life. We recognize that the education should be updated in order to be adequate to the students of XXI century, but it should also keep its strong traditions because the classics and “the traditional” are no longer adequate to the above-mentioned “new age”, and the “innovation” itself is highly insufficient to build individuals with the necessary predispositions for existence and prosperity.

After our predecessor- researchers have taken into account the timeframe and status of the time they have lived in and have come out with effective prescriptions for preservation of humanity, it is natural to register and study the current alterations and dynamics of modern society. Is it possible the so attractive for young generations social media to prove as a self-sufficient factor for socialization

although being fairly poorly studied at that only recently? What is and to what extent is the influence of this grandiose phenomenon over the socialization of the rising generations? In the same way as the media pedagogy (Qvortrup) looks into the connection between mass media and education, it is natural to look for the relation “social media – socialization”. It is time for the education to focus upon the colossal, realistically existing phenomenon “social media” and its influence over children, adolescents and adults and to find ways to turn it into educational methods or at least into an education and training aids and hence socialization of students. There is a need for fundamental and complex research in a macro- pedagogical aspect but also in terms of social media's influence over certain age groups of students and youngsters and the specifics of this influence for the Bulgarian environment and Bulgarian language. The extraction of the positive effects of the social media and the prevention of the destructive, ordinary, consumer attitudes towards them on behalf of the digital natives is a commitment for the mature generations – digital immigrants. In order to meet this commitment, the latter should know the social media and its influence upon adolescents, which is considerable but yet not solidified into a uniform, theoretical concept. Digital immigrants should recompose theirs and digital natives' thinking into a "tradigital" one (Sreenivasan), in order to construct reasonable, deeply rooted but yet modernistic habitat for the tradigital people who on their part can act as warrants for adequate socialization.

Thanks to the thorough explanation of the essence (Mandiberg, Kaplan & Haenlein, Kietzmann & Hermekens, Mansfield, Agichtein, Hausman,) and the effects (Chan, Heinz, Тодоров) of social media, these can be recognized as an independent socialization factors and as socializing multivalent factors with syncretic effect. The second scenario is derived from the observation that the social media is a virtual field for the carried over and intersected influences of all established actual factors of socialization. Irrespective of the direction of study, at the end of the day social media exceeds the prerogatives of technologies and influence socialization in a direct and indirect manner; but the author's research aims only at studying and registering this influence over a small part of the cognitive, psychological and social aspects of the representatives from Z generation, studying in the Faculty of Education, Trakia University, Republic of Bulgaria. Despite this narrow focus over a single **contingent**, the research of the social and media influence is a topical issue not only for Bulgarian education but is also under the scrutiny of many international stakeholders and organizations. While connecting social media with the education and its modernization, reference is still made to preservation of traditions and classics with the official introduction of social media into at least a small portion of academic / school life of the digital natives. Now the time to explain that discussing this issue, we recognize its importance and agree that it can only play auxiliary, enriching, complementary role in the tuition of the students but can contain unique training capabilities and didactic innovations for the teachers, students and mankind as a whole. In other words, we see the capacity of the social media, as some sort of a fine “writing pen”, aiding the classical education but not the education itself. If the social media will act as suppressor or the catalyst for social development depends on the clear registration and theoretical materialization of the “social media – socialization” relation.

The main **target** of this research is to study, diagnose and analyze the influence of social media upon the socialization of representatives from Z generation and as result of the emerged ambiguities, we have outlined the following **scientific issues**:

How could we introduce the social media into the educational system so that it would keep its traditional outlook but modernize it at the same time?

Would it be educationally useful to combine the educational classics with the social platforms?

Could social media successfully educate high digital competency – one of the eight key competencies in the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning?

Could social media act as a lifelong learning instrument for digital immigrants?

Of course there are many more questions but this research is not aimed at answering all of them since this is practically impossible within its frame of study. We are currently focused at the registration of the influence of social media upon different parts and aspects of the socialization process – if it exists and to what extent or not.

One tentative **hypothesis** hereto discusses that if the cognitive, social and emotive influence of social media over individuals from Z generation is investigated and studied it can be accepted or overruled that social media exercise influence over the socialization of the digital natives and also plays a role in the modern socialization.

The system with **criteria and indicators** for measuring the influence of social media over the socialization of representatives from Z generation is visualized in Figure 1 that shows the individual level of socialization. There are three criteria (C), set; first two - C1 and C2 have two indicators (I) – I1 and I2, and the last criterion C3 has three indicators – I1, I2 and I3. Each indicator proliferates into two factors (F), which are covered by two questions (Q) from the questionnaire and are verified with a suitable method selected in advance. These three criteria are from three different areas and their examining outlines a complete “circle” of the existent, so called social and emotional education. The first criterion “academic results” is from the cognitive area and is connected with establishment and comparison of the average marks, the vision for professional realization and the actual level of academic results. The second criterion “social influence” is from the social area and shows the actual, but also desirable social assimilation/rejection of the contingent. The third criterion “emotional intelligence” is from the psychological area and is determined by the preference in the manner of expression of emotional vocabulary, demonstration of empathy and social anxiety and proactive social response.

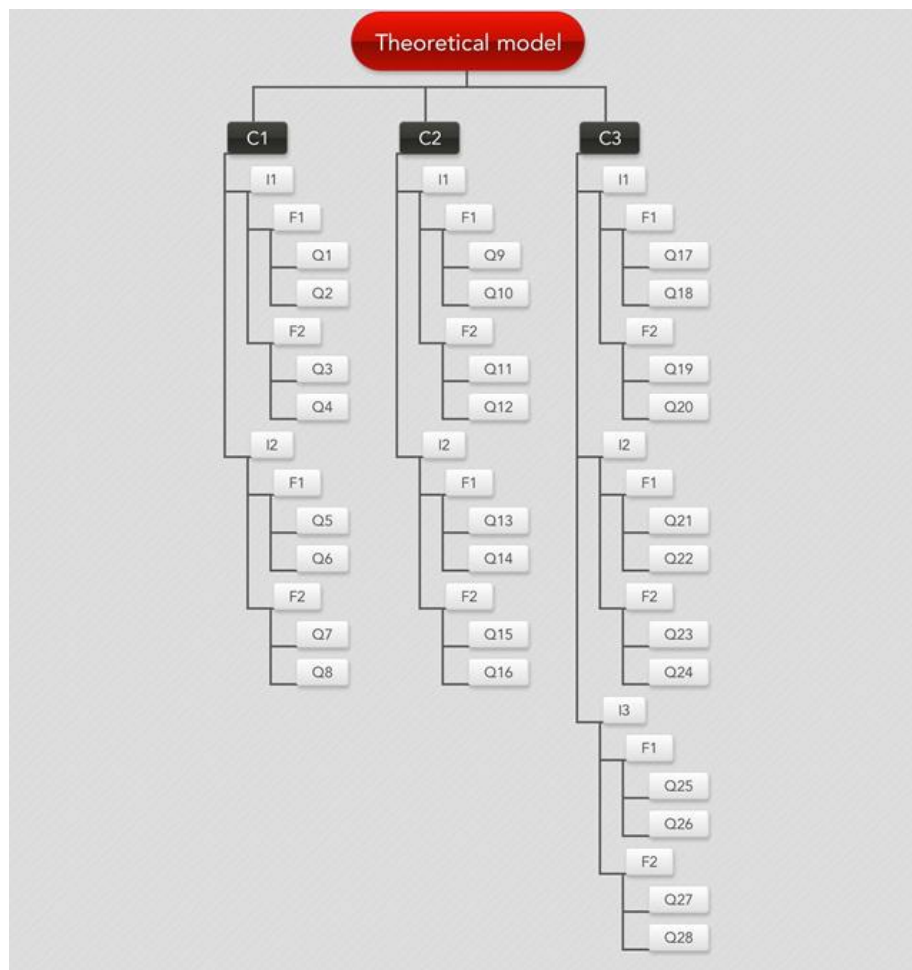


Fig. 1. Theoretical model – criteria (C), indicators (I), factors (F), questions (Q)

Currently, all data about the influence of social media over socialization serve only for as a vague orientation with fragmentary evasive character because of the rudimentary genealogy of the “social media” phenomenon, but all stakeholders in this area trace new gnostic paths, lead by the frenetic philanthropy and strive for productive and adequate socialization. The problem of the social media is notably interesting, revealing some of its essence but still hiding lots of unknowns but also challenges about its influence. Out of this research, we have gathered quite a few empiric data, outlining curious tendencies; but bearing in mind the fact that the research is still ongoing, the author preserves the right for a more detailed and specific description of the problem at a later stage. The research of the influence of social media over the socialization of digital natives outlines a long and

perilous path but the beginning has been set with the clear intention to succumb to temptation and go beyond the limitations posed by difficulties and uncertainties.

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