

## THE INTERGENERATIONAL AND SOCIOECONOMIC COMPARISON OF DIGITAL LITERACY IN SLOVAKIA

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### Introduction

With the gradual extension of the participation of children in the digital world, while most children enter the digital world at the age of 5-8 years, or even earlier (Livingston 2011), children and their parents find themselves coping up with their children's socialization into the digital space. For young people aged 10-14 years, it is their parents from whom children expect help when participating in digital space to the greatest extent. (Tuukkanen and Wilska 2014).

Children – as the members of the Internet generation, digital generation, or digital immigrants - are the first generation growing since the birth in the digital world. Digital participation of children who grow up surrounded by digital technologies since their birth (Herring 2008; Prensky 2001) - differs not only to compare to the parents – who do not lack the experience with the live in the pre-Internet period. It is important also in socio-economic comparison, as children enter the digital world not entirely alone but within their families. Not only in terms of digital access but also in terms of digital literacy and the use of digital competencies in practise, children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds can be recognized as "digital aliens" - it means as children with limited use of digital technologies, who get acquainted with digital technologies more formally than so-called digital elite (Czerniewicz and Brown 2003, p.45).

In this paper we examine the intergenerational and socioeconomic differentiation of digital and information literacy within specific age groups in Slovakia. Statistically we verify differences in self-assessments of the level of digital

competencies within specific age groups and in relation to socio-economic factors.

Based on the theoretical concept of *digital habitus* we focus on questions: Who exactly are the members of the Internet generation in Slovakia in terms of age and how can their parents be defined in terms of age? What is the level of digital and information literacy of the members of the Internet generation in Slovakia and their parents? Is there a digital gap between the internet generation of children on Slovakia and parents who are at the average age of childbearing?

## **1 Methods – theoretical concept of digital habitus**

Theoretical concept of digital habitus is based on Bourdieu's concept of habitus as a "*mechanism of cultural and social reproduction created through subjectivisation of objective rules, and a source of their objective expression in the sphere of activity.*"<sup>1</sup> Concept of habitus, applied by Robyn Zevenbergen (2007, p. 20) in the field of digital competences and the area of internalized attitudes of thinking and action of an individual in the digital space, represents the basis for the analysis of digital participation of children in the context of inter-generational reproduction cultural models.

The analysis of the digital habitus involves:

- a) the analysis of digital competence (digital literacy)<sup>2</sup> - analogically to the area of symbolic cultural capital,
- b) the analysis of the digital ethos – analogically to the pedagogical ethos covering the attitudes, opinions and patterns of activity in digital space, it can be identified a) by the extent and the forms of the digital participation in practice, b) parental mediation, which influence the extent and forms of the digital participation of children, and c) the perception of the positive and the risk aspects of the digital participation a self-reflection of individual on digital space
- and c) the area of digital entrance – analogically to the area of a material

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<sup>1</sup> The empirical findings on the examination of the educational routes in the educational system in France by Bourdieu and Passeron confirmed significant differences in cultural capital and pedagogical ethos of children (that covers the area of attitudes to the education, hopes and aspirations in educational careers) in relation to occupation and education of parents (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, p.9).

<sup>2</sup> Digital literacy means the ability to understand information and use it in different formats from different sources presented by modern information and communication technologies. It is measured through indicators, which are divided into four main segments - control work with hardware and software, managing the information virtual space and the ability to communicate through information and communication technologies (Velšic 2013).

(externalized) cultural capital examining the entrance to the digital tools.

Thus, digital literacy, digital ethos and digital entrance represent the key parts of digital habitus that can reflect the mechanisms reproduction of cultural patterns of activities in digital space between parents and their children. Whereas habitus of children is discerned empirically in relation to SES of parents<sup>3</sup>, it can be assumed that the digital habitus of children is being formed by the social-demographic factors. According to the foreign studies, the socio-economic differentiation of digital habitus was confirmed f.e. by Livingston, when the access to internet at home was found to be related to the level of socioeconomic status of the family Children, who do not use the internet or are among poor internet users, were mostly children whose parents work manually (Livingston and Helsper 2007, p. 683). Czerniewicz a Brown identified „digital strangers“ as the special group of students who got acquainted with digital technology more formally as it is for so-called digital elite, growing up surrounded by digital technology at home (Czerniewicz and Brown 2003).

Based on the theoretical concept of habitus we examine the level of digital competencies of specific groups, using demographic data and applying statistical methods of testing the significance of differences.

## **2 Findings**

### **2.1 The intergenerational comparison of digital literacy**

When comparing the digital habitus of children and parents in the field of digital literacy in Slovakia, it is necessary to define the age of members of the focus groups - members of the Internet generation of children and their parents. Who exactly are the members of the Internet generation and how can the generation of their parents be defined in terms of age?

As the origins of the introduction of the internet in Slovakia date back to the second half of the 90s and computer rooms were set up in schools by 2004, the period of the second half of the 90s can be defined as the beginning of formation of the Internet generation of children in Slovakia – as the first children born into the digital world. In some countries - for example, the US is already the '80s.

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<sup>3</sup> Empirical examinations of the educational routes in France confirmed that the cultural capital and pedagogical ethos of children (the attitudes to the education, the hopes and aspirations in the educational careers) correlate with the occupation and education of parents (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, p. 145).

According to the demographic findings, it is possible to determine the average age of parents of the first members of the Internet generation of children in Slovakia (born around 2000 in Slovakia), currently in 2016.

What is digital literacy of parents of children that are members of the Internet generation of children in Slovakia? If during the years 1990-2000 the average age of women at childbirth was 26 years (ranging from 23 years to 31 years and the first to fourth order), and the average age of father was 28,6 years, the range of the age is 42-51 years (parents of the first members of the internet generation are born in 1965-1974) (Bohmer and Luha 2013), the average age of the parents of the period can be defined as 49-51 years.

What is the level of digital literacy in both examined age groups - first members of the Internet generation and their parents today?

According to the findings of Institute for the Public Affairs that measure the level of the digital literacy of the population by the age groups, those age groups that include parents of the Internet generation (these are groups of 35-44 years or 45-54 years), reach now 88% of digital literacy.

The achieved level of digital literacy lags behind the level of digital literacy of the first members of the Internet generation in Slovakia (age group 14-17 years currently). In this group, the level of digital literacy is 100%, measured as a percentage of digitally literate within the population.

For the Internet generation of children and their parents, the digital generation divide can be confirmed in the field of digital literacy at 12%.

As in 2011, the average age of mothers at childbirth rose up to 28,3 years (27.7 in the first order to the fourth order of 31.6.) and the average age of fathers at the mother's birth of child was 32,14 year, the range 28,3-32 years defines the age group that is currently of the average age at childbearing. What is the level of the digital literacy of those who are currently in the average age at childbearing<sup>4</sup>- it means of the actual raising parental generation?

In the age group of the average age at childbearing, the level of digital literacy increased in 2013 by 3% compared to 2011 from 93% to 96%, making the group close to the strongest age groups in terms of level of digital literacy.

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<sup>4</sup> In 2011, the average age of mothers at childbirth rose up to 28,3 years (27.7 in the first order to the fourth order of 31.6.) and the average age of fathers at the mother's birth of child was 32,1 year. Thus, the range 28,3-32 years defines the age group that is currently of the average age at childbearing (Megyesiová, Bačo and Poništ 2015).

So, we can observe the digital literacy of new parental generation approaching the level of digital literacy of the age group of 14-17. If in 2011 a group of 14 to 24 years old could be marked as the age group with the highest levels of digital literacy (98%), in 2013 the group of 14-34 years old (in which the level of digital literacy in a group of 14-17 years old achieves of 100% and in the group 18-34 years old 97%) is one of the groups with the strongest digital literacy.)

Based on these findings we describe the generation that is currently in the average age at childbearing as „the Internet generation of parents“, that is able to accompany their children without the digital divide in the field of digital literacy.

If we refer to children, who are surrounded by the digital world from the birth, as the Internet generation of children, we can use the term “the Internet generation of parents” to refer to those who around 2015 in the average age of 28-32 years realize their reproductive intentions in Slovakia.

These parents born in the 80s are the first generation able to accompany their children of 10-14 years entering the digital world as the first generation of parents without the digital divide in the field of digital literacy.

This assumption is valid at an unchanged level of digital literacy in the groups studied, but even if there was an increase digital literacy among 41-50 years old, this group cannot be marked as *Internet parents' generation* as an access to their children (aged 10-14 years) to digital space has already taken place.

As the children may enter into the digital world according to some estimates at the age of 5-8 years, and some even earlier, parents can begin to accompany their children in the digital space earlier as in a case of 10-14 years old children (Livingston 2011).

## **2.2 The intergenerational comparison of information literacy**

In the next part, the level of the information literacy competencies within examined age groups is compared in order to verify the signs of digital generation of parents. In works of the Institute for Public Affairs, the digital literacy has been examined by 28 indicators (competencies), divided into 4 key components. Data on the level of self-assessment of competencies of the work with hardware, software, work with information and services and communication competencies are available. Within the component *work with information*, competencies as searching for the information and services on the internet, registration of the access to the information on the internet, searching for the information in LAN, searching for the information in databases and archives, filling in forms and documents, download and upload of

data on the internet, internet-banking and online shopping competencies are included.

On a basis of the empirical data we compared the level of the information literacy competencies achieved in the age groups:

- **Gen 1:** internet generation of aged 14-17 years
- **Gen 2:** digital generation of parents (25-34) – currently including parents at the average age of childbearing without digital gap in the field of general digital literacy
- **Gen 3:** includes parents of the members of internet generation (45-54)

According to the empirical findings on the level of the information literacy competencies among the examined age groups, **Gen 1 reaches the highest level** of competencies *searching the information on the internet, registration of the access to the internet, download and upload of the information. Gen 3 reached the lowest level and searching for the information in databases and archives. (Tab. 1)*

**Gen 2** (digital parents) reaches the highest level in case of competencies *filling in forms and documents, internet-banking, online-shopping, searching for the information in LAN*. The lowest level of the examined competencies was reached by **Gen 3**, except competency internet-banking, where Gen 1 reached the lowest level.

The empirical data suggest age related differences in the level of information competencies within the examined age groups.

We applied nonparametric Mann Whitney U test that compares the significance of differences between the independent samples, in order to verify statistically significant differences in the level of information literacy competences among the examined groups.

**Tab. 1**

*Indexes of the digital competences in the field of the work with information and services by the examined age groups (source: Digital Slovakia 2016)*

	14-17	25-34	45-54
Searching for the information and services on the internet	0,90	0,85	0,62
Registration of the access to the information and services on the internet	0,90	0,79	0,62
Internet-banking	0,27	0,70	0,44
Searching for the information in databases and archives	0,60	0,53	0,32
Searching for the information in LAN	0,43	0,57	0,25
Filling in forms and documents	0,55	0,72	0,40
Download and upload of the information	0,74	0,70	0,37
Online shopping	0,52	0,76	0,44

In case of the *searching for information in databases and archives* competence, **Gen 1 reached significantly higher level** in comparison to both older Gen 2 and Gen 3 generations (Tab. 2).

In case of the *searching for the information in LAN* competence, **Gen 2 reached significantly higher level** in comparison to Gen 1 and significantly lower level was reached by Gen 3.

In case of the *using internet banking* competence, **Gen 1 reached significantly lower level compared to the Gen 3**. Similarly, in case of *online shopping*, the highest level was reached in Gen 2 (a group of the raising digital generation of parents), although there was no significant difference confirmed between them and Gen 1 (the internet generation of children). A **significantly lower level** of the *internet shopping* competency was confirmed **between Gen 3 and Gen 1**. The significantly lower level of *internet banking* in Gen 1 compared to Gen 3

indicates the differences in the use of information competences in practice in relation to age. Due to this, older age groups may reach higher level in special information literacy competences. This finding (and the significantly higher levels of searching for data in LAN and copying and transmitting data in LAN competences Gen 2 in comparison to Gen 1) can support also the thesis of the overlapping of the online and offline sociability.

According the findings on differences in the level of digital competences at *work with hardware, software, information literacy and communication* components (Tab. 2):

**Gen 1 reached significantly higher level in one competence compared to Gen 2** (*searching in databases and archives*), and in six competences **when compared to Gen 3** (*searching for information in databases and archives, working with scanners, installing facilities to PCs, searching for data in LAN, copying and transmitting data in LAN, and online-shopping*).

**Gen 2** reached significantly higher level compared to **Gen 1** in case of searching in databases and archives, searching for information in LAN and copying and transmitting information in LAN. Gen 1 also reached lower level, when compared to Gen 2, in case of filling in forms and documents, online-shopping and work, although not on significant level.

These findings support the thesis of reducing the digital generational divide within the examined age groups. The also point to growing of the first digital generation of parents (Gen 2) that is able to accompany their children in digital world without significant differences in digital competences.

**Tab. 2**

*Statistical significance of the differences in digital competences between Gen 1, Gen 2 and 3*

*(source: Digital Slovakia 2016, own calculations based on Mann Whitney U test)*

	Internet generation (Gen 1) Aged 14-17	Internet generation of parents (Gen 2) Aged 25-34	Parents of the internet generation (Gen 3) Aged 45-54	Mann Whitney U test (p) Gen 1 vs Gen 2	Mann Whitney U test (p) Gen 1 vs Gen 3	Mann Whitney U test (p) Gen 2 vs Gen 3
Searching for the information in databases and archives	0.60	0.70	0.32	p=0.01208*	p=0.02034*	p=0.4009
Internet banking	0.27	0.60	0.44	p=0.15386	p=0.01072*	p=0.65272
Online shopping	0.52	0.76	0.44	p=0.56868	p=0.03*	p=0,40654
Work with scanner	0.66	0.71	0.43	p=0.20005	p=0.0151*	p=0.61006
Install the facilities to PC	0.51	0.40	0.30	p=0.15854	p=0.0251*	p=0.74896
Copying and transmitting the data in LAN	0.51	0.57	0.30	p=0.04136*	p=0.01046*	p=0.8493
Searching for the data in LAN	0.43	0.57	0.25	p=0.04136*	p=00734*	p=0.74864

### **2.3 The socioeconomic comparison of digital habitus**

Even though the socioeconomic digital divide in digital literacy declines in Slovakia<sup>5</sup>, the impact of the digital habitus (as the mechanism of inter-generational reproduction of digital literacy) was confirmed by the empirical findings. According to the international study ICILS 2013, students coming from better quality home

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<sup>5</sup> As regards digital literacy, the socioeconomic differences in digital literacy still persist, but they are declining when compare to 2011. Digital literacy of population with basic education reaches 63%, in the group of people with secondary education it is 87% and in the group of university graduates 95%. In the group of manual workers the share of digital literacy increased from 79% to 87%, with low education from 52% to 63%, in households with low social-economic status from 55% to 61% in 2013.

backgrounds (with a higher level of education of parents, a higher status of working parents and a greater number of books in the home) achieve better results in computer and information literacy. According to the empirical findings, the socio-economic differentiation is reflected also in other areas of digital habitus in Slovakia. Significant difference in digital literacy of students in Slovakia was also confirmed in relation to the *digital entrance* at home (access to the internet). According to the study, 97% of Slovak pupils have got the internet entrance at home, contrary to 3% who lack entrance to the internet at home. Children who do have access to internet at home achieve significantly better results in digital literacy (ICILS 2013).

The influence of parental education on children's level of digital literacy is also supported by the findings of the PIAAC study, focused on qualitative assessment of different competences, including digital competences and the ability to use them in practice (PIAAC 2013).

As the habitus of children is discerned empirically in relation to SES of parents (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, p.145), we tested socioeconomic determination in the field of digital information competencies. We verified significant differences of the information literacy level in relation to education in all examined competences by chi-square test (Tab. 3). The findings suggest the persistence of the socio-economic digital divide in the field of information literacy, based on data from a representative sample of a population (Digital Slovakia, 2016).

Regarding the area of *digital ethos*, the factors of education and occupation of parents, place of residence and income level affect the intensity of Internet use by parents, the degree of awareness of the time range and content of children's digital participation, as well as the perception of positive aspects and risks of digital participation (Velšic 2015). Parents with higher education are more aware of the risks connected with digital participation of their children, especially of the risk in child's personality development. These parents were more likely than others to agree with the positive impact of digital technologies on the education of children.

According to the empirical findings, *'parents' awareness of children's digital participation is higher among parents with higher education and mentally working parents, while older, less educated, manually working and unemployed parents, and parents from poor households are more likely to not be able to follow their children's activities in the digital world because of lack of digital competences'* (Velšic 2015, p.16).

**Tab. 3**

*Indexes of digital competences in the field of information literacy according the education of population (Digital Slovakia 2016, own calculations by Chi square test, results are significant at  $p < \alpha$ ).*

Education	Primary education (ISCED 100)	Secondary education (ISCED 252, 253)	Tertiary education (ISCED 354, 344)	ISCED 766	Chi square test
Searching for the information and services on the internet	0,49	0,47	0,69	0,85	112.5934*
Registration of the access to the information and services on the internet	0,49	0,47	0,69	0,85	117.2481*
Internet-banking	0,18	0,29	0,54	0,77	160.0951*
Searching for the information in databases and archives	0,28	0,25	0,53	0,66	206.3499*
Searching for the information in LAN	0,20	0,18	0,39	0,58	97.1931*
Filling in forms and documents	0,30	0,28	0,53	0,75	119.5006*
Download and upload of the information	0,40	0,27	0,50	0,70	96.5129*
Online shopping	0,31	0,32	0,56	0,77	96.7946*

What significant differences are identified in the *digital ethos* in relation to socio-economic factors? We examined *the importance of digital technologies in the field of study and preparing for school* as the indicator of the attitudes towards the use of digital technologies at school. By comparing the assessments of the

importance of digital technologies in study, significant differences in assessments of the importance of digital technologies at school in relation to education (chi-square 139.7349,  $p < 0.01$ ) and socioeconomic status of the family (chi-square test 153.6462,  $p < 0.01$ ) can be confirmed. According to the empirical findings, the socioeconomic digital divide also persists in the field of attitudes and opinions on digital technologies (digital ethos) in Slovakia.

As part of parents do not have the necessary digital competences to accompany their children in the digital world currently, and as it is socially differentiated parental mediation that may be important in the development of critical thinking, of ability of reflecting and processing information in the digital space in the future (in the context of digital habitus), it is important to compensate for the lack of parental mediation in this area<sup>6</sup>.

### 3 Discussion

In this work, the significance of the age-related differences in the level of digital competences was verified within specific age groups – Gen 1 – the internet generation of children in Slovakia (aged 14-17), Gen 2 – digital generation of parents (aged 25-34) and Gen 3 – parents of the internet generation (aged 45-54). Based on statistical comparison of the level of information competences and other digital competences within the examined age groups, when Gen 1 reached significantly lower level in six competences compared to Gen 3 and in one competence when compared to Gen 2, the signs of the emergence of the first *digital generation of parents* without digital gap to compare to the internet generation of children (Gen 1 aged 14-17) can be confirmed.

Gen 1 reached significantly lower level of internet-banking competence in comparison to Gen 3, and significantly lower level of competence in searching in databases and archives, searching for information in LAN and copying and transmitting information in LAN in comparison to Gen 2. Gen 1 also reached lower level of filling in forms and documents, online-shopping and working when compared to Gen 2, although not on significant level.

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<sup>6</sup> There are several functioning prevention projects in Slovak media environment that support this goal, f.e. [www. ovce.sk](http://www.ovce.sk), [www. zodpovedne.sk](http://www. zodpovedne.sk), [www. stopline.sk](http://www. stopline.sk), [www. stopline.sk](http://www. stopline.sk) , [www. pomoc.sk](http://www. pomoc.sk). However, according to experts, it is not the structural determinants that act as primary prevention of the risks in the digital world, but the meaningfulness of activities for children in the real world, as the availability of the desirable offline leisure activities that children will enjoy, and a harmonic home environment, that supports the secure patterns of digital participation (Tomková 2015).

## Conclusion

This work followed the issues of digital generational and socioeconomic divide in Slovakia. On the basis of the theoretical context of *digital habitus* we examined various parts of digital participation of children and their parents.

According to the empirical findings, the significance of the digital divide in Slovakia persists in terms of socioeconomic divide, but declines in terms of intergenerational digital divide in the field of digital literacy within the examined age groups.

Statistically confirmed *age related differences in the structure of information literacy* within the examined age groups can be explained in the context of overlapping of the online and offline sociability and the differences in (online and offline) activities in relation to age.

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## Resumé

### MEDZIGENERAČNÉ A SOCIOEKONOMICKÉ POROVNANIE DIGITÁLNEJ GRAMOTNOSTI NA SLOVENSKU

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Práca sleduje medzigeneračné a socioekonomické porovnanie kompetencií z oblasti digitálnej a informačnej gramotnosti vo vybraných vekových skupinách. V práci overujeme štatistické rozdiely v úrovni kompetencií z oblasti digitálnej a informačnej gramotnosti. Poukazujeme na redukciiu digitálneho medzigeneračného

rozdelenia v oblasti digitálnej gramotnosti na Slovensku a pretrvávajúce socioekonomické digitálne rozdelenia.

### **Summary**

## **THE INTERGENERATIONAL AND SOCIOECONOMIC COMPARISON OF DIGITAL LITERACY IN SLOVAKIA**

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This paper examines intergenerational and socio-economic differentiation at the level of digital and information competences in specific age groups in Slovakia. Using statistical methods, we verified the significance of the differences in the level of digital competences. Based on demographic data and the findings in digital literacy we pointed to the reduction of the digital generation divide of digital literacy and the persistence of the socioeconomic digital divide.