# Digital literacies for employability- fostering forms of capital online

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## ABSTRACT

The web has revolutionised the world of knowledge and created new literacies practices to operate in a mediated world. In doing so, it has reinvented the workplace, the skills, attitudes and values individual attribute to contemporary forms of communication as a form of learning, living and working in a digital society.

This article provides a reflection of digital literacies as forms of capitals that can be acquired, enhanced or transformed online. The article also discusses how this conceptualisation of digital literacies as capitals were applied to the design of an open online course (MOOC) focused on digital literacies for employability. Finally, the article provides recommendations regarding the development and deployment of digital literacies as a key area of learning.

**Keywords:** Digital culture, Digital Literacies, Capitals, Employability, MOOCs

# 1    INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the web has become a space of participation, presenting features beyond the technological ability of retrieving information. The web is also now an infrastructure known for the socialisation of multiple practices available to a large percentage of society. This global phenomenon has been appropriated by different sectors and layers of society, resulting in the change of practices through new forms of co-constructing, sharing, and communicating knowledge in distributed spaces. Businesses, for example, have started to enhance their online presence with interactive platforms (Kaplan and Hanelein, 2010). Open video and audio channels, such as YouTube and SoundCloud,

respectively, have promoted a culture of remixing (Lessig, 2009) and new business venture that were not thought of less than 10 years ago.

As employers start to catch up with these new ways of working, they are also quickly taking their business online and developing strategies that allow them to communicate with their customers and connect to new audiences. Such strategies require a new set of digital skills and attitudes - digital literacies - that requires them to adjust to a new way of doing business to an emergent digital culture (Miller, 2011) that is characterised by different forms of participation, such as content production, sharing of information and networking practices. Participation thus becomes a conduit of presence, a tangible form of 'being' online.

Nonetheless, employers are not only concerned with the way they establish their business presence online; they are also interested in how their (future) employees are building their digital footprints and how it represents them and influences business. As more individuals use the web as a space of participation, they implicitly start to develop their own record of participation online, i.e., their digital identity (Costa and Torres, 2011). Whilst some consciously seek to develop their own personal branding as a form of promoting themselves, networking and making themselves more visible (Harris and Rae, 2011), a large percentage of web users do not build their digital identity in a conscious way. Although the web is now integrated in people's lives, and ingrained in their social and professional practices, navigating the social and cultural conventions implicit to the digital world implies a set of digital literacies that many individuals lack.

In this article we aim to conceptualise digital literacies as forms of capital necessary to thrive in a digital knowledge society. We do so through the work of Pierre Bourdieu, especially regarding his focus on forms of capital. We use preliminary data from an educational intervention in which this approach was applied. We conclude the article by providing suggestions regarding the deployment of digital literacies in relation to employability opportunities.

## 2 LITERACIES FOR A DIGITAL SOCIETY

The (re)conceptualization of literacies in relation to the digital world derives from the affordances the web provides with regards to how individuals interact and work with text online. Although no longer a new phenomenon, 'digital literacies' is still a concept in the making; a concept that can acquire different designations depending on the context or situation to which it is applied. In this vein, the term digital literacies has been coined to establish a difference with information and computer literacies, which although still important when considering the digital world, do not provide a contemporary perspective of what it means 'to be' online.

The technological revolution, started by the use of personal computers, epitomised a landmark in the way information could be accessed by many and disseminated by few, thus maintaining intact the traditional role of information gatekeepers. This technological fix (Gouseti, 2010) provided access to information more widely, but it essentially resulted in the transference of practices from an analogue to a digital system. The literacies required to interact with this, then new, medium of information were not very different from the conception of literacy as the ability to read, write and decode information from written material (McGarry, 1991). In recent decades, however, the emergence of the web as an interactive space made mainstream became a space of citizen participation by presenting communication features beyond the technological ability of retrieving information. These technological affordances have transformed not only knowledge, but also work practices, consequently generating the need to equip individuals to work in a digital society in which the web increasingly plays a key role.

The practices developed on the web present a new level of complexity to both education and the organisations that aim to cater for the requirements and expectations of a changing society. There

is no denying that the web has become a meaningful resource for information seeking. Yet, it has, at the same time, also become a space of socialisation, production and publication of information. The web has thus become a pool of current, interactive and networked knowledge featuring different formats and styles. What this in practice means is that the definition of text has been taken to a whole new dimension, encompassing not only its written form, but also including visual methods such as audio, photography and video as forms of expression. These methods of communication, although not new, are materialised through publication mashup practices including websites, blogs, audio and video content – podcasts and videocasts, respectively – and/or pictures as examples of information production. In so being, the web inevitably reinvents not only the way individuals learn, socialise, and develop voice and presence in a distributed public sphere, but it also transforms the workplace and the job market. In essence, it presents itself as a conduit to a new ways of 'being' and a new way of 'working'.

This transformation is evidenced by the emergence of a digital culture (Miller, 2011) that is characterised by unhampered online participation, creation of content and sharing of knowledge productions (Jenkins et al, 2009) as tangible by-products of citizens' online activities and experiences. Moreover, participation as a key component of digital culture is only made visible through individuals' active input, contributions and sharing of ideas and information. Individuals acting on the digital are thus both audience and active members of the online world that knows no geographical or temporal boundaries. In this regard, the effectiveness of the web as a place of participation and network depends as much on individuals' approaches to digital practices as it does on the technological solutions that support them. In other words, technology and individuals' practices influence one another (McLuhan, 1961). Hence, there is a pressing need to prepare learners with skills and competences that will enable them to face up to a future not yet known (Pence, 2007; Qualman, 2012); a future that is predicted to be influenced by the digital and the practices that are therein developed.

As such, and in order to keep up with the technological pace and remain relevant to the eyes of industry, citizens would benefit from developing literacies that are situated in and for those ever-changing contexts the web stimulates. Catering for digital literacies thus means to place learning in a contemporary social, cultural, and economic reality as part of a life-wide and lifelong learning approach.

## 3  DIGITAL LITERACIES: TOWARDS A CRITICAL CONCEPTUALISATION

Literacy is a social construction (Li, 2001); a product of social practices that are 'historically situated' (Barton et al, 1999, p8).  Hence, it is important not to disregard the socio-cultural dimension in which the development of literacies is placed (Baynham, 1995). For centuries, core literacies have been associated with reading and writing. Together with numeracy they were regarded as essential working skills. In the current age, however, digital and web literacies have not only come to join this group of important skills, but they are also becoming essential life skills. In the current European society the perceptions of 'required literacies' for the workplace are transformed with the development of new social practices and conventions that are increasingly influenced by the digital. In the western world, in particular, this realisation has generated considerable debate with different entities advocating the need to make digital literacies a core part of one's education and/or training as a form of facing up to the challenges imposed by the digital. This functional approach is also directly linked to governmental propositions regarding their priorities to digitise their nations as an answer to an emergent, competitive market. The European Union has made efforts in this direction by proposing the training in digital literacies for both a specialised workforce and for consumers as well as suggesting the modernisation of education across the EU through its Digital Single Market strategy and relevant policies[1]. Scotland, in particular, has followed this proposition by launching the Digital Scotland initiative that is based on four pillars: digital connectivity, digital economy, digital

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[1] For further information please see: https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/policies/75988

participation and digital public services. What such initiatives recognise is that digital connectivity is no longer the only prerogative to tackle the digital divide and digital inequality issues. Digital connectivity or access to the internet is rather just a fundamental condition to start addressing the needs imposed by the web. In this vein, digital literacies fundamentals can be classified according to three actions: use, understand and create (Hoechsmann and DeWaard, 2015). Digital literacies thus can be regarded as social and cultural practices (Costa and Harris, 2017) rather than technical skills, which have become common-place as digital technologies permeate not only the workplace but also the household. Digital literacies are in this sense embedded in a specific set of conventions and are more often than not embodied in one's practice. Yet, they are not necessarily taught but rather appropriated – sometimes unconsciously - to the context of the user. Van Dijk's (2014) research of individuals' digital practices reveals this same very aspect in his research. He contends that digital inequalities are directly linked to social class practices and that they show how individuals from different backgrounds perceive the value of digital technology in their social, learning and working lives. Whereas middle class individuals often link the digital to lifelong learning opportunities and professional development, working class individuals tend to perceive the digital as a form of entertainment. Such findings can be interpreted in light of a digital exclusion lens given that individuals' perceptions and attitudes towards the digital can offer or deny them the opportunity to convert their online engagement into learning and working opportunities, in other words, meaningful practices (Castells, 2011).

In recognising the need to promote literacies for a world in transition, Hinrichsen and Coombs (2014) have developed a critical digital literacy that frames digital practices as a form of engagement with different types of text. The framework proposed also acknowledges the effects of one's participation as a form of performativity or presentation of the self (Goffman 1959). In doing so, Hinrichsen and Coombs (2014) build on Luke and Freebody's (2003) 'Four Resource Model' that encapsulates a multi-literate requirement for engaging with text through the use of the four following roles: (1) Code breaker, (2) Meaning maker, (3) Text user and (4) Text critic. Nonetheless, the critical understanding of digital literacies in their perspective is provided by a fifth resource - 'Persona' - that aims to convey the social interconnections and cultural representations of a contemporary digital environment as illustrated below in Figure 1. It is this fifth resource that demarcates digital literacies from traditional conceptions of what it means to be literate in a contemporary society. This fifth resource also denotes what it means to 'be' part of the online world as an active citizen.



**Figure 1 The Five Resource Framework by Hinrichsen and Coombs (2014)**

Figure 1 above shows that the five Resource Framework is configured for a digital structure, i.e., access to the web. It can a useful guide when designing a curriculum that aims to prepare learners for 21st Century life-wide learning and working practices, in essence, employability in the context of the digital economy. Lemos et al (2016) validate this perspective by considering digital literacies as interrelated components of knowledge practices in the contemporary age. They highlight the following dimensions:

1. The operational dimension - includes the skills and competences that enable individuals to read and write in diverse digital media;
2. The cultural dimension- refers to developing a repertoire of digital literacy practices in specific social and cultural contexts (e.g.: constructing and/or maintaining social, educational and/or professional relationships online);
3. The critical dimension- recognises that meaning-making of resources is a selective process and one that operate as a means of social control

In short, it is widely acknowledged that the web has become pervasive of our society and that it is especially relevant in the context of knowledge work. Moreover, this interpretation of literacies for a digital world places an emphasis on the interpretation of (digital) practice as a form of accounting for the functioning of the social world. As Bourdieu (1986) reminds us, to account for the social world it is necessary to reintroduce capital in all its forms as a form of understanding how practices are reproduced or transformed. With this in mind, we set to develop an online course on digital literacies and employability. In the process of putting together a comprehensive curriculum, we asked ourselves what type of capitals should be fostered in the course for participants to thrive in a digital economy.  The following section provides a reflection of that conceptualisation, i.e., of literacies as forms of capital, more concretely, of digital literacies as social, cultural as symbolic practices situated online.

## 4    DIGITAL LITERACIES AS FORMS OF CAPITAL: CURRENCY FOR EMPLYMENT

> *To possess the machines, [they] only need economic capital; to appropriate them and use them in accordance with their specific purpose [they] must have access to embodied cultural capital, either in person or by proxy* (Bourdieu, 1986,243)

Although Bourdieu did not live to see the developments of the web and how it would transform the distribution of information and production of knowledge, he understood that technology – the machines – is only a means to an end, a resource that needs to be deployed through the skills and practices individuals are able to develop with and from it. The key to this revelation is in the second part of the citation provided above. 'To appropriate' means to Bourdieu to adopt and adapt the technology to a means-end. This necessarily requires the mastery of specific skills and localised knowledge manifested through a set of practices appropriate to the context to which they are applied. Digital literacies thus become a form of currency and distinction that is starting to characterise employment practices worldwide. Proof of this are the results of a recent survey developed by Jobvite (2016) which found that 96% of recruiters use the web and social media as part of their hiring process. This shows a huge shift in how individuals can access the job market, but also how the job market accesses them. The study also revealed that 80% of the recruiters surveyed had been positively influenced by a candidate's professional social network profile while 78% of them had also been negatively influenced towards a candidate's inappropriate use of social media. This activity which is called 'profiling' (McDonald et al., 2016) shows that one's online presence weighs on recruiters' decisions when shortlisting candidates and offering them a job. In this respect, an online presence as evidence of ones' practice and indication of one's professional character is something individuals need to take into consideration when participating online, even when that participation is meant for social purposes only.

On the web the boundaries between public and private lives have not only shifted, but they have also become blurred by the hybridization of communication spaces, as digital and physical spaces become one unified world in users' imagination. Marwick and boyd (2011; 2014) denominate this collision of spaces 'context collapse' (p. 1054). Context collapse is enabled by the affordances of the web in connecting multiple spaces where individuals interact. Traditionally information about an individual would be compartmentalised as part of one's different activities, commitments, interests and networks. Nowadays, however, different facets of one's life can be easily accessed online to form an imagined understanding of that individual's way of being. The tracing and tracking of an individual's online participation, or digital footprint, can be regarded as an iterative and historical

record of one's lived experience, professional and otherwise. The exposure provided by the web enables audiences to connect at the same time it allows them to form an opinion about one's presence and presentation of the self. Participation online thus becomes a performativity act (Goffman, 1959) that requires careful consideration of one's (re)presentation - especially of one's professional persona (Fieseler et al., 2015) – as evidence of the capitals individuals possess or lack. It is with this realisation in mind that we set out to develop an online course on digital literacies and its relation to employability. We organised the content of the course in relation to Bourdieu's forms of capital as 'personal currency' for a digital world. In doing so, we devised a 3 week programme where each week was dedicated to a specific form of capital appropriate to thrive in the digital world. What follows is a brief explanation of the rationale behind this approach, a reflection of what these forms of capital mean in a digital context and how they were operationalised in relation to the course.

One of Bourdieu's most used concepts is *Capital*. As his interpretation of capital serves the purpose of understanding social action, it is not surprising that Bourdieu's conceptualisation of capital takes on different forms (see Bourdieu, 1986). More concretely, Bourdieu approaches capital not only from an economic point of view, but also from a social, cultural and symbolic perspective. These last three forms of capital are the dimensions that interest us the most, because they can be used to provide an insight into one's digital practices and allow us to explore how and why online participation is deployed by different individuals.

In regarding digital literacies as social and cultural practices (Costa and Harris, 2017), we must consider them within the forms of capital that orients social agents' dispositions towards their activities. As such, we conceptualise digital literacies as forms of capital in the following way:
- *Cultural capital*, in Bourdieu's view, exists in three different states: an objectified state (physical, cultural assets individuals acquire also within their family and social circles); an institutionalised state (in the form of institutional recognition, such as educational qualifications); and in an embodied state (verifying one's dispositions, principles and values). For the purpose of this study it is the embodied state that interests us more because it encloses in itself the practices and norms related to participating online.
- *Social capital* is evidenced by individuals' social links. On the web these links are made visible by the interpersonal connections individuals are able to establish as part of their networking activities.
- *Symbolic capital* is understood as form of prestige, reputation and distinction that is conveyed through the way an individual performs his/her practice and affirms himself/herself through his/her status quos.

Although not explicitly included in the design of the curriculum proposed, *Economic capital* is implied by the access that individuals need to have to technology, for example, laptops, mobile phones and broadband access, in order to be able to engage in digital practices and develop digital literacies.

When seen from this perspective fostering these forms of capital in the context of a digital economy means to develop a set of dispositions conducive of a digital culture as embodied practices. This, in theory, should result in a transformation of the habitus, i.e., the dispositions an individual displays when interacting online. *Habitus* can be broadly defined as the evolving process through which individuals act, think, perceive and approach the world and their role in it, i.e., the way individuals develop their conduct of 'being' and participating in a given environment. As such, *habitus* does not exist on its own. It connects the individual to the social environments in which they exist and where their practice is performed. Individuals' habitus is, in this sense, influenced by the *field,* or social space, in which their practices are materialised. Yet, habitus is also determined by the different types of capital that make up individuals' existence and dispositions towards a given set of practices. It is in this sense that we approach the development of a curriculum of studies appropriate to the demands of a digital economy and of a shifting digital divide (van Dijk, 2014), a curriculum of studies in which access to technology, as a form of economic capital, is a precondition to engage online and where the development of appropriate social, cultural and symbolic capitals online instigate suitable

and effective digital practices. The next section presents the curricular developments of digital literacies as social, cultural and symbolic practices.

## 5    AN OPEN ONLINE COURSE ON DIGITAL LITERACIES AND EMPLOYABILITY

The development of our study programme for the fostering of digital literacies for employment implied the scaffolding of the different types of capital, as discussed above, as a form of socialising participants into the practices that typify a digital participatory culture. Moreover, it was our goal to raise the awareness of those practices to an explicit level, as certain forms of capital or the effects of it on one's practice often operate at an unconscious level. In doing so, we mapped the respective capitals to the weekly sessions and the content associated with it, as presented in Table 1:

**Table 1 Mapping digital literacies onto forms of capital for employability in the digital age**

| Weekly topic | Type of capital | Practices and concepts learnt |
|---|---|---|
| **Week 1- Digital literacies: living, learning and working online** | Cultural Capital | An overview of digital literacies in the context of a digital society and  employability, including the dispositions, attitudes and values related to online participation |
| **Week 2 - Making connections: participating online** | Social Capital | Engagement in social networking practices as a way of individuals developing their sphere of influence |
| **Week 3- Digital identity: looking after your digital footprint** | Symbolic Capital | Curation of online activity and management of one's reputation |

In light of our conceptualisation of digital literacies as practices inherent to emergent conventions developed online, we decided to start the course by introducing and discussing the meaning of digital literacies in the context of a society gone digital and the employment opportunities that derive from this phenomenon. The purpose was to provide course participants with an understanding of practices situated online. In so doing we discussed the values, approaches and practices associated with a digital participatory culture as defined by Jenkins et al. (2009) and hosted synchronous and asynchronous discussions where participants could reflect on their engagement with the web and thus make plans with regards to future actions. The ultimate goal of this week was to realise the potential of the web in terms of employability through a digital culture perspective so that participants could start to incorporate some of the values associated with 'being' online as part of their own digital participation.

For week two we proposed the fostering of social connections online as a form of acquiring or developing social capital. Social capital is probably the type of capital that most users will relate to with regards to the web because of its direct connection with social networking sites (SNSs). Nonetheless, the goal of approaching this topic was related to the idea that online the links established between individuals are only effective when actively curated and cultivated to suit one's personal and professional development. The effectiveness here relates to both the capacity of establishing social connections that benefit one's learning and professional development rather than for their personal entertainment. Communication, in this regard, is the main vehicle of social capital; the glue of social interrelationships between social actors. These social bonds can be seen as having a transformative effect on individuals' practices (Bourdieu, 1985) given that individuals, as social agents, often assimilate the viewpoints and conventions associated with the groups of which they are members and with which they establish a sense of belonging. Social capital can also have an increasing effect on one's cultural capital, especially in its embodied form, as a conduit of new practices. The on-going acquisition of embodied cultural capital is partly rooted in an individual's background. Yet, it is also influenced by the communities and networks an individual joins and in which he/she participates. In this regard, cultural and social capitals are interrelated. Embodied

cultural capital becomes perceptible through the ways individuals develop their practice online and which attitudes and standpoints are associated with it. An individual's cultural capital also justifies his/her social standing (Grenfell, 2008). Such assertion led us to realise digital literacies can also be regarded from a symbolic capital lens (see Bourdieu, 1991) as a form of social positioning and *status quo* which Hinrichsen and Coombs (2014) stipulate as a critical digital literacy.

The last section of the course was thus dedicated to the curation of one's online activity and management of one's reputation. The purpose was to stimulate reflection about the way we present and affirm ourselves online through acts of participation – or absence of it - and how we are considered in light of the narrative that our digital footprint implicitly reveals about us. Symbolic capital represents this notion very well. For Bourdieu symbolic capital is manifested through an individual's reputation within a given social circle and the social status an individual enjoys with that same very social space. As a form of socially recognised power and influence (Bourdieu, 1991, p.72), symbolic capital is thus the result of accumulated capitals. As such, symbolic capital in the context of a digital culture should not be ignored, but rather understood and cultivated as the ultimate outcome of being digitally literate.  As a form of legitimation of one's participation online symbolic capital is manifested through the recognition significant others ascribe to one's online participation. The opposite is seen as misrecognition of one's digital practices. In the context of employability, symbolic capital is thus exemplified by the acknowledgment or appreciation of one's practice that is provided by professional peers. The symbolic effect of capitals is manifested as a form of social distinction and social recognition. This symbolic effect is expressed in digital literacies literature through proposals of 'Persona and reputation management' or 'curation of digital identity' (see, for example, JISC, 2014).

Designing an online course on digital literacies based on concepts of capitals allows us to relate digital practices to the requirements of a digital society and the employability opportunities available therein. What is more, in this day and age, knowledge of how the web works and how the web can be appropriated for professional purposes is an implicit aspect to a wide range of workplaces as a form of professional growth (Gillen, 2014).

## 6   FIRST REFLECTION ON THE COURSE

In this section we present our initial reflections about the course, our experiences in facilitating it and participants' expectations, perspectives and approaches of the programme offered. Information was drawn from survey data collected before and after the three week course.
The course was advertised online and recruited 92 participants from a wide range of professions and backgrounds, such as teachers, university lectures, career advisors, higher education students and members of the public who expressed a desire to learn more about digital literacies and the practices that pervade the online world. This was made very explicit through the answers participants provided when enrolling to the course, as exemplified below by the quote examples. On the one hand participants' expectations related to their own personal development and reassurance that they were using the web in appropriate ways:

> *To understand more about the current digital literacy expectations and how*
> *to look at applying those improving my digital footprint.* (RP3)

> *To fill gaps in my digital knowledge and experience.* (RP61)

On the other hand, participants were also interested in exploring how educational institutions were catering for digital literacies and how these connected to employability:

> *To find out and discuss how other institutions and academics are tackling*
> *digital literacies and employability.* (RP77)

>*To broaden my understanding of digital resources available to me and update my general awareness as I work outside the tech sector but recognize its universality.* (RP 15)

As expected, participants were primarily concerned in acquiring knowledge and experience of how to navigate the (hidden) norms of the web and to explore how the practices developed online can lead to employment opportunities:

>*Gain a different perspective as to how these issues are addressed as part of staff development* (RP81)

Through this brief expectation analysis, it is obvious that participants were intrigued and enthusiastic about the approach we proposed to address digital literacies in connection to employability through forms of capital. Academic research connecting both areas is scarce, even though mainstream news, such as the Guardian[2], and popular websites, as for example, JISC's[3] and the Chartered Institute for IT[4], to name a few, have been at the fore front of this discussion. This shows a disconnection between research and practice that needs to be tackled so that these ideas and practices can acquire a higher importance in the educational offering currently provided by educational institutions.

Despite the number of registered participants and the expectations they expressed in enhancing their digital literacy knowledge and experience, participants more often than not took on a more conservative approach when participating in the course. This was visible by the fact that synchronous sessions were well attended, but asynchronous participation was left to a minimum, as participants seemed more interested in engaging with the content provided by the course moderators rather than creating tangible evidence of their engagement with the ideas and practices proposed in the sessions, which in turn could serve as topics of discussion. Although research points out that lurking is a form of learning (see Lee at al., 2006; Sun et al., 2014) and of peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991), in activities whose main purpose is to discuss and engage in digital literacy practices participants' contributions become a crucial element of the teaching and learning activity. Moreover, their participation in the context of the course is critical as a way of applying theory to practice and to experiment the effects of participation.

One of the reasons for the scarcity of participation in between live sessions was allegedly the lack of time to engage in the discussions during the weeks in which the course ran. In the final survey, participants testify to this as shown in the quotes below:

>*I enjoyed the live sessions, but I wasn't able to participate during the week due to work and family commitment* (Anonymous survey)

>*It was interesting to learn about the links between digital literacies and employability. My only regret is not to have had availability to experiment with some of the suggestions discussed in the course.* (Anonymous survey)

Whereas others indicated that now that they had the basic knowledge regarding these topics they would like to:
>*…continue to engage with it by revisiting the content produced in the course and accessing new information.* (Anonymous survey)

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[2] https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2011/dec/15/digital-literacy-employability-student-experience

[3] http://jiscdesignstudio.pbworks.com/w/page/60225981/Developing%20digital%20literacies%20for%20employability

[4] http://www.bcs.org/category/17854

This leads us to consider two interrelated aspects. The first deals with the issue of time and the second with the pace and purpose of learning which, if we are to follow a digital culture approach to the letter, should be driven by individuals' own availability and context of practice (Dias de Figueiredo, 2005).

When discussing digital practices through a curriculum of studies that places an emphasis on non-formal educational approaches it is almost impossible to expect participants to follow a set of established rules, such as scheduled participation, that are most commonly associated with formal education. Teaching digital literacies to adults requires catering for the context of their professional practice and considering the issues of time and availability; something that our online course did not take into consideration as it followed a similar pattern to that of courses taught at the university. Although it offered spaces for peer interaction on a daily basis, the course was set up to explore a different topic each week, thus requiring timely engagement by its participants.

The same time issue can be applied to a reflection concerning the development of social, cultural and symbolic capitals as a form of 'personal currency' and social status. Although the issue of time was not explicitly developed in Bourdieu's work, it is implicit in his work, as he perceives one's personal capitals as developing over time as part of an individual's background. The acquisition of capitals is manifested through their incorporation into individuals' habitus which ends up characterising their practices. Some authors have even suggested a new the term to express this idea in the context of a digital culture. Roberts and Towsend (2016) use the term 'digital capital' to convey how individuals acquire and incorporate digital literacies as part of their online practices. However, we consider that such assumption is not sufficient to include one of the most critical aspects of digital participation, that is, its symbolic effect of reputation. The management of an individual's digital identity requires conscious steps towards the building of his/her digital record or footprint, in other words, his/her participation online. This management and construction of an online persona is a reflection of different capitals that influence not only individuals' practices but also the acquisition of a new type of capital that is exclusively digital. However, given the context collapse the web provides by connecting and blurring the limits of public and private sphere, professional and personal lives (Davis and Jurgenson, 2014), it is perhaps more useful to consider how different capitals contribute to the development of digital literacies and reflect how these can be transformed into practices that help foster employability skills.

## 7 NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

These first reflections have served to support our future professional regarding how to continue to develop opportunities to teach digital literacies in connection with employability for different target audiences and in and beyond formal education. In this regard, we aim to devise new teaching formats where digital literacies can be embedded as part of a wider learning and practice-based programme that may be more easily integrated with participants' lives and commitments. In doing so, we will continue to explore digital literacies through a framework of 'forms of capitals' as this idea seems to provide a natural connection with the topic employability.

In moving forward with similar approaches we also recommend working in close consultation with employers regarding both their needs and perceptions of digital literacies, something that we have done in previous interventions (see Costa and Harris, 2017), but which was harder to achieve in light of the developments of an open course that attracted a wider and diverse range of participants.

In the context of Higher Education – which is our context of practice – it is also important to train different stakeholders who are in charge of mentoring the careers of our students so that they are able to guide them with regards to their digital literacies needs. In this sense, digital literacies should not only be the practices of teachers and students, but also of career advisors, for example.
In this vein, there is a need to try to transform mind-sets about what it is understood as being the key skills and approaches people should develop for different professions, disciplines or trades. More

than ever before, the web is a globalised space and digital literacies a universal need as they affect different facets of society and daily life.

Finally, it is important that digital literacies are approached as social, cultural and symbolic practices that reflect a contemporary society. Ignoring this reality is to perpetuate digital inequalities than go beyond being able to access digital technology. The key purpose of digital literacies is to appropriate technology – the web in particular – to develop a whole new set of attitudes and approaches to living, learning and working online.

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