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ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ / RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Effect of Digitalization Process on Public Relations Education: A Research on Academics

Dijitalleşme Sürecinin Halkla İlişkiler Eğitimine Etkisi: Akademisyenler Üzerine Bir Araştırma

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Abstract

The education process, which has undergone digital transformation due to factors such as the transition to information society, change in technology, social dynamics, and globalization, has also affected the discipline of public relations. In this direction, the study aims to systematically obtain expert opinions on the digitalization process in public relations education. In addition, this study further aims to make predictions of public relations education, reveal expert opinions, and reach consensus with the panel members consisting of 15 academicians/experts in the field of public relations. The results of the research, which applied Delphi technique as a method, pointed out that the panel members reached a consensus on 50 variables in 3 rounds in total. In this regard, there was one particular opinion that was emphasized in the field work: flipped and blended education models were considered as the most successful and efficient digital education models during public relations education's digitalization process. According to another finding of the study, flexibility and adaptability, social and cross-cultural skills, communication and collaboration, information literacy, ICT literacy, and global awareness are among the most important skills and themes that both academics and students should have in public relations education's digitalization process. Finally, the research findings show that in competencies (proficiency-qualification), learner competence for academicians and creative communicator competence for students came to the fore.

Keywords: Public Relations, Education, Digitalization in Education, Digital Education, Delphi Technique

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Öz

Bilgi toplumuna geçiş, teknolojideki değişim, toplumsal dinamikler ve küreselleşme gibi faktörlerin etkisiyle dijital dönüşüme uğrayan eğitim süreci halkla ilişkiler disiplinini de etkilemiştir. Bu doğrultuda araştırmada, halkla ilişkiler eğitiminde dijitalleşme sürecine ilişkin uzman görüşlerinin sistematik bir şekilde elde edilmesi amaçlanmıştır. Ayrıca, halkla ilişkiler alanında 15 akademisyenden/uzmandan oluşan panel üyeleri ile halkla ilişkiler eğitiminin geleceğine ilişkin tahminlerde bulunmak, uzman görüşlerini ortaya çıkarmak ve uzlaşma sağlamak çalışmanın bir diğer amacıdır. Araştırmada yöntem olarak Delphi tekniği kullanılmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda, panel üyelerinin 50 değişken üzerinde toplamda 3 turda tamamen fikir birliğine ulaştıkları görülmüştür. Araştırma bulgularına göre halkla ilişkiler eğitiminde dijitalleşme sürecinde en başarılı ve verimli dijital eğitim modellerinin ters-yüz edilmiş ve harmanlanmış eğitim modelleri olduğu görüşü ön plana çıkmıştır. Araştırmanın diğer bir bulgusuna göre, halkla ilişkiler eğitiminde dijitalleşme sürecinde hem akademisyenlerin hem de öğrencilerin sahip olması gereken en önemli beceriler ve temalar arasında, esneklik ve uyum, sosyal ve kültürlerarası beceriler, iletişim ve iş birliği, bilgi okuryazarlığı, bilişim teknolojileri okuryazarlığı ve küresel farkındalık unsurları yer almaktadır. Sonuç olarak, yeterliliklerde (yetkinlik-nitelik) ise akademisyenler için öğrenen yeterliliği, öğrenciler için yaratıcı iletişimci yeterliliği ön plana çıkmıştır.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Halkla İlişkiler, Eğitim, Eğitimde Dijitalleşme, Dijital Eğitim, Delphi Tekniği

Introduction

Technology in the digital world is used incrementally to present education, knowledge, and skills in new and creative ways, and it is increasingly penetrating the field of education and skills (Grand-Clement, 2017, p. 4). With the digital age, the nature of education and the profession of public relations is undergoing a radical change. It is possible to understand the impact of the technological revolution from changes in the way information is exchanged. While the usage of existing media tools change, completely new communication channels emerge. To adapt to this new environment, 21st century public relations professionals have to understand how all these tools and conditions affect them and how these are controlled (Brown, 2009, p. 4).

In this context, in this study, which aims to systematically obtain expert opinions on the digitalization process in public relations education in the 21st century where such acquisitions and skills gain importance; the subject of digitalization in education is addressed in terms of skills, competencies, and themes.

Therefore, digitalization is thought to accelerate the adaptation process for the acquisition of life and career skills, learning and innovation skills, information, media, and technology skills, which are prominent and important in public relations education. Public relations academics and professionals should be sensitive to the skills, competencies, and themes that have gained importance in the field in the 21st century with digitalization in public relations education. Because the nature of the profession, which is a communication effort established as a part of strategic management and basically to influence the public, is based on the establishment and maintenance of good relations. In this respect, the public relations profession, which is affected

by many dynamics such as social changes and globalization, has to incorporate the skills, competencies, and themes required by the age.

Delphi technique, which is based on receiving controlled feedback through a sequential questionnaire, was used in this study, which aims to systematically obtain expert opinions on the digitalization process in public relations education and thus to reveal expert opinions by making predictions of public relations education. The participants of the research are composed of a pool of experts consisting of 15 academicians, including Prof. Dr. (5), Assoc. Prof. (5), Dr. Lecturer (5), who work in different titles in the relevant field. As a result of the research, it was seen that the panel members reached a consensus on 50 variables in 3 rounds. Accordingly, as a result of the consensus obtained from the experts, the factors that stand out among the skills that academics and students should have are flexibility and adaptability, social and cross-cultural skills, communication and collaboration, information literacy and ICT literacy. The competencies expected of academicians and students in the public relations discipline are learner competence and creative communicators. Global awareness is among the prominent themes. In addition, in the digitalization process of public relations education, the most successful and efficient digital education models are blended and flipped education models.

Digitalization in Education: A Brief Overview

The digitalization of the education sector is undoubtedly considered one of the greatest revolutions of the age. This great revolution is important in shaping the future and changing the destiny of humankind (Parlak, 2017, p. 1743). Some educational models change and develop in parallel with the development of technological opportunities. Digital (distance) education models, each of which is definitely based on technology, but differing in terms of various features, are indicated below.

Asynchronous Education: In asynchronous education, in other words, in learning that takes place in a different time and different places, educators and students form non-real-time interaction remotely (Midkiff & DaSilva, 2000, p. 15). *Synchronous Education*: Synchronous education is the education that is valid for situations where educators and students meet for the lecture at the same time but are in different places (Midkiff & DaSilva, 2000, p. 16). *Blended Education*: Blended learning is a combination of face-to-face and online learning experiences (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008, pp. 5-6). *Flipped Education:* Flipped education refers to a learning style in which students watch education videos at home and do classic homework such as problem sections and back-of-chapter exercises in the classroom (Bergmann & Sams, 2014, p. 82).

The 21st century skills are specified by Wagner (2008) as critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration across networks and leading by influence, agility and adaptability, initiative and entrepreneurialism, effective oral and written communication, accessing and analyzing information, curiosity, and imagination. Another categorization of 21st century skills was carried out by Trilling and Fadel (2009). Accordingly, these skills consist of three main dimensions that are learning and innovation skills, digital literacy skills, career, and life skills. Partnership for

21st Century Learning-P21 (2019a) defines 21st century skills in three main dimensions; life and career skills, learning and innovation skills, information, media, and technology skills. Although different categorizations have been made for 21st century skills, it is understood that skills in all dimensions significantly overlap with each other and can be combined at this point (Geisinger, 2016, p. 247).

In this study, which aims to systematically obtain expert opinions on the digitalization process in public relations education, the 21st century skills and themes determined by P21 (2019a; 2019b) and elements for the competencies identified by the International Society for Technology in Education – ISTE (educators/academics competencies, n.d.) and ISTE (student competencies, n.d.) are taken as a basis. Accordingly, the main dimensions and sub-dimensions of these skills and competencies are explained as follows.

Life and career skills consist of sub-dimensions of flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity and accountability, and leadership and responsibility (P21, 2019b, pp. 6-8). *Flexibility and adaptability* are to be quickly adapted to a new communication, learning, working, and living conditions. *Initiative and self-direction* are a necessity of the obligation of individuals to take initiative to keep up with the times and to manage themselves about every aspect of life. *Social and cross-cultural* skills are about understanding cultural and social differences and using these differences to generate more creative ideas and solutions to problems. *Productivity and accountability* are to set goals and to work devotedly to achieve, to be responsible, and to use the time well. *Leadership and responsibility* are to show teamwork, individual leadership, benefiting from the strengths of each team member, collaboration around coordination among team members, and a common vision (Trilling & Fadel, 2009, pp. 75-84).

Learning and innovation skills consist of creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, communication and collaboration sub-dimensions (P21, 2019b, pp. 4-5). *Creativity and innovation* skills are to be able to judge, to be patient, to be open to new ideas, and to learn from failures (Trilling & Fadel, 2009, p. 56). *Critical thinking and problem-solving* are asking rational questions about the solution of the problem adopting multiple perspectives (Wagner, 2008, pp. 14-15). *Communication and collaboration* are the necessity of exchanging information and ideas and having critical thinking skills (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009, p. 10).

Information, media, and technology skills are indicated as information literacy, media literacy, and ICT (information, communications, and technology) literacy sub-dimensions (P21, 2019b, pp. 5-6). According to the American Association of School Librarians (1998), *Information literacy* refers to the ability of individuals to access the information they need effectively, to evaluate this information critically and competently, to use it accurately, creatively, and efficiently. *Media literacy* is a series of perspectives that individuals actively use to reveal, process, and interpret the meaning of the messages they encounter when they are exposed to the contents of the mass media (Potter, 2016, p. 71). According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *ICT literacy* emphasizes the ability to use certain digital software, infrastructures,

and devices to access new information or to create new information, to critically read, evaluate and use this information effectively (2013, p. 29).

Educational institutions not only address basic subjects such as world languages, art, mathematics, history, geography but also need to give individuals competency in issues such as global awareness, financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy, civic literacy, health literacy, environmental literacy, which are called interdisciplinary themes that address the 21st century (P21, 2019b, pp. 3-4). While *global awareness* indicates the understanding of the interdependence of world countries, it means that individuals should acquire a universal awareness to be sensitive to other cultures, beliefs, and values (Gibson, Rimmington & Landwehr-Brown, 2008, p. 15). *Financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurial literacy* is the ability of individuals to read, discuss, analyze, manage, and communicate the economic conditions that affect their financial well-being (Engelbrecht, 2008, p. 168; Davis & Muir, 2002, p. 100). *Civic literacy* refers to the ability of individuals to be knowledgeable about social and political issues, to develop consciousness and attitude, to define, analyze and develop behavior towards social and political problems, to be an informed citizen, and to initiate social change (Argenal & Jacquez, 2015, p. 62). *Health literacy* is a wide range of skills and competencies that individuals develop to research, find, understand, evaluate, and use health information to reduce health risks and improve quality of life (Zarcadoolas, Pleasant & Greer, 2005, pp. 196-197). *Environmental literacy* is the capacity of individuals to perceive and interpret environmental systems and to take appropriate measures to protect, restore or improve them to maintain the healthy functioning of these systems (Disinger & Roth, 1992, p. 3).

Individuals of the digital age must develop 21st century skills and prepare themselves for a digital society. At this point, educators have important roles. Educators have the responsibility of educating their students in a competency that can understand the problems of the age and provide solutions to these problems (Bates, 2019, p. 24).

The standards set on behalf of educators/academics by the ISTE are a roadmap that will help students become stronger under the guidance of educators. The standards set by ISTE and expressed as 21st century academics competencies are expressed with the titles of a learner, leader, citizen, collaborator, designer, facilitator, and analyst (ISTE, n.d.; Crompton, 2017, p. 3).

Also, students of the 21st century must be prepared to thrive in a constantly evolving technological environment. In this regard, the ISTE has set some standards for students of the digital age. These standards have been developed to empower the student and ensure that the action of learning is student-centered. Standards determined by ISTE and expressed as 21st century student competencies are expressed as an empowered learner, digital citizen, knowledge constructor, innovative designer, computational thinker, creative communicator, global collaborator (ISTE, n.d.; Brooks-Young, 2017, p. 3).

Public Relations Education

In the 21st century, the skills and competencies, and the themes of this century that academics and students, in other words, all individuals expected to keep up with the age should have referred to the features required within the scope of public relations activities and the qualities that a public relations specialist should have.

Public relations are a dynamic profession that is constantly changing. Public relations nowadays have become a sophisticated sector that needs individuals who are confident in their abilities and skills and are aware that they are well suited to a highly demanding profession (Botha et al., 2007, p. 81).

Public relations academics focused most of their attention on results, in other words, on the knowledge and skills students need for application and on the curriculum, that is, the creation of the course content for the desired results (Coombs & Rybacki, 1999, p. 55). The Public Relations Education Commission proposes a revision of the public relations undergraduate education in line with the 21st century skills, competencies, and themes. In this direction, the commission states that public relations students can develop in line with the required knowledge, skills, and competencies (Heath, 2005, p. 921).

The skills that must be acquired by students to become a competent public relations professional are expressed as seven areas that define a successful public relations career: diversity in terms of experience, performance, ability to communicate, ability to contact, taking precautions, and passion, predisposition to teamwork, personality and being sympathetic. On the other hand, for a public relations professional to succeed, he/she must have skills and competencies in the fields of communication, technology, agenda, business, and management, be open to communication in an attitudinal sense, be able to defend his/her institution, dare to say no, act ethically, not afraid of taking risks, having a positive appearance (Seitel, 2017, pp. 44-46), be able to write effective texts, be able to communicate accurately under pressure, to able to think versatile, to be able to take briefs, be responsible, be able to take benefit of the internet, preferably speaking more than one language, be able to work in harmony with team members, think creatively and analytically, master effective presentation techniques (Aydede, 2002, pp. 81-82). Therefore, a public relations undergraduate program should prepare students for a strategic management role by providing them an education based on skills, principles, ethics, and critical thinking content (Vieira Jr & Grantham, 2015, p. 546).

Theaker (2004), which deals with the effect of digitalization on public relations, presents the ideas emerging in the results of a study on the effect of new technologies on the field in a collective framework. Accordingly, the emergence of web publishing as a result of the progress of the media is an important development. This development does not only change the way institutions and public relations professionals do their business but also changes the expectations of target audiences. In this context, the skills that public relations professionals should have gain importance. Future public relations professionals will possess a wide range of skills (pp. 326-327).

In this context, besides the acquisitions, these issues have become a necessity in public relations education, where skills, competencies, and themes are of great importance. Therefore, the digitalized education process also shapes public relations education, and, in this regard, it has become a necessity for academics and students to quickly adapt themselves to the digital education process. In the digitalized education process, public relations education should be at a level that will provide 21st century skills and the academics-student relationship should be evaluated as process management.

Methodology

Objective

The study aims to systematically obtain expert opinions on the digitalization process in public relations education. Besides, it aims to make predictions about public relations education, to reveal expert opinions, and to reach consensus with a panel group consisting of academicians/experts in the field of public relations. In this study, in which the effect of the digitalization process on public relations education is investigated, the sub-objectives are as follows: It aims to identify the evaluations of public relations academics and the points where they reach a consensus on the subject, and in this way, it aims to reveal the skills, competencies, and themes that both academics and students should have to adapt to digitalization.

In this regard, "which skills, competencies, and themes gain importance in public education in the digitalization process?" is determined as the main question of the research. In addition to the main research question of the research, answers were sought for the following research questions.

- What are the evaluations and consensus points of public relations academics on the subject?
- What are the skills, competencies, and themes that both public relations academicians and students should have to adapt to digitalization?

Method

Considering the features of the Delphi technique, it is seen that there are three procedures. These are (1) hiding the real names of the authors (anonymity), (2) repetition with controlled feedback, and (3) statistical group response (Rossman & Carey, 1995, p. 234). The process of implementing the Delphi technique can be repeated continuously, up to the point where experts reach consensus. In the literature, it is underlined that the number of repetitions sufficient for experts to reach a consensus is three, but it is also stated that it can be done in four stages for data collection when necessary (Hsu & Sandford, 2007, p. 2). The first step of the method is carried out by asking an open-ended question about the subject. In the second stage, in the first stage, the subjects obtained from open-ended questions are turned into items and a question

form is created. The questionnaire is delivered to the participants with a chosen method and the participants are asked to rate (importance, agree-disagree) on the subject with a Likert scale. In the third stage, the same questionnaire as in the second stage is sent. The first quarter (Q1) third quarter (Q3), median (Md), and width (R) are added to the questionnaire before sending. R value is obtained by subtracting the value of Q3 from the value of Q1. It is learned whether there is a change in the responses of the participants in the light of this information and thus the final stage is completed. Q1 (First Quartile): It is the point that takes 25% of the answers to the left and 75% to the right. Median (Md): It is the point that takes 50% of the answers to the left and 50% to the right. Q3 (Third Quartile): It is the point that takes 25% of the answers to the right and 75% to the left. R (Width): It is the difference between the third quartile and the first quartile (R=Q3-Q1). A small difference indicates consensus, while a high difference indicates no consensus (Şahin, 2001, pp. 217-218). It is assumed that the value R should be less than 1.2 for the participants to reach consensus (Zeliff & Heldenbrand, 1993, p. 24). Permission was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Necmettin Erbakan University for the implementation of the study. At the same time, an informed consent form was received from the participants.

Participants

Panel members selected as participants in the research must be qualified to reflect expert opinions. Panel members, as a result of their experience and qualifications, should be able to provide a deep insight into the research topic and have important views on the topic. The ideal group size in the number of panel members should consist of 10 to 20 experts (Şahin, 2001, p. 217). In this context, a total of 15 panel member academicians with different titles, consisting of Prof. Dr. (5), Assoc. Prof. (5), Dr. Lecturer (5), who have completed their undergraduate/graduate education in the discipline of public relations, and who are working as a faculty member in the public relations discipline of state universities, constitute the expert pool of this research. Due to the difficulty to access all public relations academics, the cost of time, and the difficulty of sampling, the research was carried out using the convenience sampling method, one of the non-probability sampling types. Accordingly, the panel members of the research are academicians who have professional experience of at least 10 years and up to 30 years in public relations departments of state universities (4-year faculty).

Data Collection Technique

The questionnaire technique is used in the data collection phase of the research. The research was conducted between December 2020 and January 2021. The questionnaire form is sent to the experts by e-mail in every round, and the data are collected online. Each tour continued in the cycle of sending the questionnaire form to all experts, receiving answers from them, and evaluating the answers, and creating the questionnaire form by researchers in the next round. In the first round, open-ended questions are asked to the participants and their comments and explanations are obtained. As a result of this tour, 50 items that serve the purpose of the research were created. In the second round of the questionnaire, a five-point Likert scale was used to

learn the opinions of the experts regarding the determined variables. With the 5-point Likert scale expressions created, they were ranked from negative to positive. At the end of the second round of the questionnaire, the opinions of the experts on 50 items were evaluated and it was found that all questions except one question were agreed. It was determined that the problem on which no consensus was reached was *"Using flipped digital education model in digitalization in public relations education makes the digital education process more successful and efficient"*. Hence, in the third round of questionnaires, experts were asked their previous answers, the average of all participants' answers, and all research questions containing 50 items, and they were asked to report their new answers in line with the instructions. As a result of this tour, it was seen that the participants reached full consensus in all variables.

Findings

There are four tables in this section where the findings and comments on the research results are represented. The titles and numbers of the academicians participating in the study are given in Table 1. Table 2 includes the results of the first questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions determined in line with the research purpose and directed to the academicians in the expert pool. Table 3 includes the findings of the 2nd stage survey, which emerged as a result of the re-transmission of the 2nd questionnaire, which was determined in line with the answers given to the first question form consisting of open-ended questions, to the academicians. In this table, the mean ($\overline{X}$) and standard deviation (σ) values of the variables are stated. Finally, when it comes to Table 4, it is seen that the third stage survey findings are included. In this table, First Quartile (Q1), Median (Md), Third Quartile (Q3), and Width (R) values are specified for the variables.

Table 1. Titles and Numbers of Experts

Title	Number
Prof. Dr.	5
Assoc. Prof.	5
Dr. Lecturer	5
Total	15

Looking at Table 1, which shows the titles and numbers of the academicians that make up the pool of experts, it is seen that a total of 15 faculty members in 3 different title types, 5 Professors, 5 Associate Professors, and 5 Dr. Lecturers, who work in the public relations departments of universities, ensure participation. Since this study is carried out in the context of Turkey, the title distinctions are made according to the type of titles for academicians used in Turkey. Accordingly, the hierarchy of titles is from bottom to top as Dr. Lecturer (Assistant Professor), Associate Professor, and Professor.

Table 2. First Stage Survey Findings and Comments

Items	
Digital Education Models	
Digital Education Models	Asynchronous
	Synchronous
	Blended
	Flipped
Academicians' Skills and Competencies	
Life and career skills	Flexibility and adaptability
	Initiative and self-direction
	Social and cross-cultural
	Productivity and accountability
	Leadership and responsibility
Learning and innovation skills	Creativity and innovation
	Critical thinking and problem solving
	Communication and collaboration
Information, media, and technology skills	Information literacy
	Media literacy
	ICT literacy
21st Century Themes	Global awareness
	Financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurial literacy
	Civic literacy
	Health literacy
	Environmental literacy
21st Century Educator Competencies	Learner
	Leader
	Citizen
	Collaborator
	Designer
	Facilitator
	Analyst
Students' Skills and Competencies	
Life and career skills	Flexibility and adaptability
	Initiative and self-direction
	Social and cross-cultural
	Productivity and accountability
	Leadership and responsibility
Learning and innovation skills	Creativity and innovation
	Critical thinking and problem solving
	Communication and collaboration
Information, media, and technology skills	Information literacy
	Media literacy
	ICT literacy

21st Century Themes	Global awareness
	Financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurial literacy
	Civic literacy
	Health literacy
	Environmental literacy
21st Century Student Competencies	Empowered learner
	Digital citizen
	Knowledge constructor
	Innovative designer
	Computational thinker
	Creative communicator
	Global collaborator
Total	50

In the first phase of the study, open-ended questions were asked to the participants. These questions are briefly as follows: (1) Institutional infrastructure (internet, distance education, etc.). (2) The most successful and efficient digital education model. (3) Life and career skills. (4) Learning and innovation skills. (5) Information, media, and technology skills. (6) Themes. (7) Competencies. In this context, second-round survey questions were created in line with the responses of the academicians to open-ended questions and the literature.

Research questions were created in line with the answers obtained from the expert pool and as a result of the literature review, 50 items in Table 2 were obtained. At this stage of the study, it was determined that the responses obtained from the pool of 15 academicians working in different titles in the field of public relations and the digital education models and 21st century themes coincide with the skills and competencies that educators and students should have in the 21st century.

In the first round, the participants stated that asynchronous, synchronous, blended, and flipped can be used as digital education models in the digital transformation process in public relations education. It has been stated by the academicians that the mentioned digital education models have a serious mediating role in the acquisition and development of 21st century skills (*Life and career skills*, *Learning and innovation skills, Information, media, and technology skills)* competencies (*Learner, Leader, Citizen, Collaborator*) and themes (*Global awareness, Civic literacy, Health literacy*) for both educators and students. It was determined that the information obtained in line with the literature review and the responses of the participants in the first round coincided with each other in the scope stated above.

In the digitalization process in public relations education, the participants stated that it is very important for both academicians and students to have the dimensions that constitute the 21st century skills, competencies, and themes and are given in detail in Table 2 to reach the digital age.

Table 3. Second Stage Survey Findings and Comments

Items			
Digital Education Models		$(\overline{X})$	Σ
Digital Education Models	Asynchronous	2.1	,51
	Synchronous	4.0	,75
	Blended	4.3	,89
	Flipped	4.5	,51
Academicians' Skills and Competencies		$(\overline{X})$	Σ
Life and career skills	Flexibility and adaptability	4.6	,48
	Initiative and self-direction	4.4	,50
	Social and cross-cultural	4.6	,50
	Productivity and accountability	4.5	,51
	Leadership and responsibility	4.5	,51
Learning and innovation skills	Creativity and innovation	4.6	,50
	Critical thinking and problem solving	4.6	,48
	Communication and collaboration	4.8	,35
Information, media, and technology skills	Information literacy	4.7	,45
	Media literacy	4.6	,48
	ICT literacy	4.7	,45
21st Century Themes	Global awareness	4.4	,50
	Financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurial literacy	3.9	,45
	Civic literacy	4.0	,25
	Health literacy	4.0	,59
	Environmental literacy	4.0	,45
21st Century Educator Competencies	Learner	4.5	,51
	Leader	4.1	,83
	Citizen	4.3	,48
	Collaborator	4.3	,48
	Designer	4.0	,65
	Facilitator	4.4	,51
	Analyst	4.4	,63
Students' Skills and Competencies		$(\overline{X})$	Σ
Life and career skills	Flexibility and adaptability	4.5	,51
	Initiative and self-direction	4.4	,50
	Social and cross-cultural	4.5	,51
	Productivity and accountability	4.2	,77
	Leadership and responsibility	4.1	,74
Learning and innovation skills	Creativity and innovation	4.7	,45
	Critical thinking and problem solving	4.8	,35
	Communication and collaboration	4.8	,35
Information, media, and technology skills	Information literacy	4.8	,41
	Media literacy	4.8	,41
	ICT literacy	4.8	,41

21st Century Themes	Global awareness	4.4	,51
	Financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurial literacy	3.9	,79
	Civic literacy	4.2	,41
	Health literacy	4.0	,79
	Environmental literacy	4.1	,51
21st Century Student Competencies	Empowered learner	4.4	,51
	Digital citizen	4.3	,61
	Knowledge constructor	4.4	,50
	Innovative designer	4.3	,48
	Computational thinker	4.4	,51
	Creative communicator	4.7	,45
	Global collaborator	4.2	,59

In Table 3 above, the mean ($\bar{X}$) and standard deviations (σ) of the answers given by the participants for the determined 50 items are demonstrated.

According to Table 3, it is seen that the most successful and efficient digital education model in the process of digitalization in public relations education is the flipped with an average of 4.5. Examining the life and career skills sub-dimensions determined for the educators, it is understood that two variables have the highest average. These are flexibility and adaptability and social and cross-cultural skills with an average of 4.6. Looking at the learning and innovation skills determined for the educators, it is understood that the highest average is 4.8 in the communication and collaboration variable. When it comes to knowledge, media, and technology skills for educators, it is seen that two variables share the highest average. These are information literacy and ICT literacy with an average of 4.7. For the 21st century themes that should be dominated by educators, the highest average belongs to the global awareness variable with 4.4. Finally, it has been determined that the most important competency that academicians who undertake education and training duties in the discipline of public relations in the 21st century is learner competency with an average of 4.5.

Considering the life and career skills sub-dimensions determined for students in the digital age according to Table 3, it is understood that two variables share the highest average. These are flexibility and adaptability and social and cross-cultural skills with an average of 4.5. When it comes to the learning and innovation skills determined for the students, also here, two variables share the highest average. These variables are critical thinking and problem-solving skills and communication and collaboration skills, which have an average of 4.8.

Considering the skills that students should have about information, media, and technology, it is seen that all three sub-dimensions of information literacy, media literacy, ICT literacy are equally important with an average of 4.8. In terms of the dimensions of 21st century themes expressed for students of the digital age, it is seen that the highest average belongs to global awareness with 4.4. Finally, when it comes to the 21st century competencies determined for students, it is understood that the highest average belongs to the creative communicator competency with 4.7.

Table 4. Third Stage Survey Findings and Comments

Items					
Digital Education Models		Q1	Median	Q3	R
Digital Education Models	Asynchronous	2.0	2.0	2.0	0.0
	Synchronous	4.0	4.0	4.0	0.0
	Blended	4.0	5.0	5.0	1.0
	Flipped	4.0	5.0	5.0	1.0
Academicians' Skills and Competencies		Q1	Median	Q3	R
Life and career skills	Flexibility and adaptability	4.0	5.0	5.0	1.0
	Initiative and self-direction	4.0	4.0	5.0	1.0
	Social and cross-cultural	4.0	5.0	5.0	1.0
	Productivity and accountability	4.0	5.0	5.0	1.0
	Leadership and responsibility	4.0	5.0	5.0	1.0
Learning and innovation skills	Creativity and innovation	4.0	5.0	5.0	1.0
	Critical thinking and problem solving	4.0	5.0	5.0	1.0
	Communication and collaboration	5.0	5.0	5.0	0.0
Information, media, and technology skills	Information literacy	4.0	5.0	5.0	1.0
	Media literacy	4.0	5.0	5.0	1.0
	ICT literacy	4.0	5.0	5.0	1.0
21st Century Themes	Global Awareness	4.0	4.0	5.0	1.0
	Financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurial literacy	4.0	4.0	4.0	0.0
	Civic literacy	4.0	4.0	4.0	0.0
	Health literacy	4.0	4.0	4.0	0.0
	Environmental literacy	4.0	4.0	4.0	0.0
21st Century Educator Competencies	Learner	4.0	5.0	5.0	1.0
	Leader	4.0	4.0	5.0	1.0
	Citizen	4.0	4.0	5.0	1.0
	Collaborator	4.0	4.0	5.0	1.0
	Designer	4.0	4.0	4.0	0.0
	Facilitator	4.0	4.0	5.0	1.0
	Analyst	4.0	5.0	5.0	1.0
Students' Skills and Competencies		Q1	Median	Q3	R
Life and career skills	Flexibility and adaptability	4.0	5.0	5.0	1.0
	Initiative and self-direction	4.0	4.0	5.0	1.0
	Social and cross-cultural	4.0	5.0	5.0	1.0
	Productivity and accountability	4.0	4.0	5.0	1.0
	Leadership and responsibility	4.0	4.0	5.0	1.0
Learning and innovation skills	Creativity and innovation	4.0	5.0	5.0	1.0
	Critical thinking and problem solving	5.0	5.0	5.0	0.0
	Communication and collaboration	5.0	5.0	5.0	0.0
Information, media, and technology skills	Information literacy	5.0	5.0	5.0	0.0
	Media literacy	5.0	5.0	5.0	0.0
	ICT literacy	5.0	5.0	5.0	0.0

21st Century Themes	Global Awareness	4.0	4.0	5.0	1.0
	Financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurial literacy	4.0	4.0	4.0	0.0
	Civic literacy	4.0	4.0	4.0	0.0
	Health literacy	4.0	4.0	5.0	1.0
	Environmental literacy	4.0	4.0	4.0	0.0
21st Century Student Competencies	Empowered learner	4.0	4.0	5.0	1.0
	Digital citizen	4.0	4.0	5.0	1.0
	Knowledge constructor	4.0	4.0	5.0	1.0
	Innovative designer	4.0	4.0	5.0	1.0
	Computational thinker	4.0	4.0	5.0	1.0
	Creative communicator	4.0	5.0	5.0	1.0
	Global collaborator	4.0	4.0	5.0	1.0

Accordingly, in the third stage of the study, the participants were asked to answer the questionnaire again, taking into account the second stage data. The purpose of conducting this tour is to allow an expert to see the average of the responses given by other experts and to review their responses. Thus, the responses given by changing in the third round provide to obtain the first quartile, median, third quartile, and width values existing at the beginning of each variable.

In the questionnaire sent to the participants in this round (3rd round), they are asked to repeat their old answers if there is no change in their views, and if there is a change in their views, they are asked to identify their new opinions on a likert scale. In the second round of the questionnaire, all participants agreed on 49 items, except for the flipped item. In other words, because the value R is 2 on the flipped digital education model in this round (3rd round), there is no consensus on either the positive or negative side. In the last round of the questionnaire, a positive agreement was reached by all the participants on the variable *"Using flipped digital education model in digitalization in public relations education makes the digital education process more successful and efficient"*. Looking at the medians of the 50 items shown in Table 4, a consensus was reached at the level of 2 (disagree) in the variable *"The use of asynchronous digital education model in digitalization in public relations education makes the digital education process more successful and efficient",* and it is seen that a positive consensus has been reached at degrees 4 and 5 on all other variables. Accordingly, public relations academics have reached a consensus that the most unsuccessful digital education model is the asynchronous education model in the digitalization process of the field education and in the context of providing educators and students with relevant skills, competencies, and themes. In other words, while a positive consensus is reached in all variables except this item, a negative consensus is reached on the asynchronous digital education model variable.

When we look at the R values in Table 4 that indicate the width, it is understood that a consensus value of 0.0 on 16 of 50 variables, and a consensus value of 1.0 on 34 of 50 variables is reached. As Zeliff and Heldenbrand (1993) and Şahin (2001) also stated, if the value R obtained by subtracting the Quartile 1 value from the Quartile 3 value of the variables is less than 1.2, this indicates that consensus has been achieved. In this direction, it is possible to say that all

participants have a common opinion on the variables of the study in line with the averages shown in Table 3 since the difference between all the relevant values in Table 4 is 1.0 or 0.0.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study was carried out to obtain a consensus from the expert pool formed by public relations academics by addressing the effects of the digital age on public relations education within the framework of digital education models, 21st century skills, competencies, and themes.

According to the participants, the most successful and efficient digital education model in the digitalization process in public relations education is flipped and blended. According to the participants, the most important skills that both academics and students should have in the digitalization process in public relations education are flexibility and adaptability, social and cross-cultural skills, communication and collaboration, information literacy, and ICT literacy. In this process, the most important theme that academics and students should have is global awareness. In competencies, it is seen that learner for academicians and creative communicator for students are important.

In this respect, the results of some studies in the literature in terms of public relations education, digitalization, skills combination and which are similar in the context of the subject and findings of this study are as follows; in a study conducted by Stacks, Botan and Turk (1999), the opinions of public relations educators and sector practitioners on various dimensions of public relations education are included. As one of the important results of the study, it was determined that the participants agreed on the basic knowledge, concepts, and skills that should be taught in public relations education. In this context, when considering the similar aspects of the results of the relevant study and this study, it is understood that the field of public relations requires similar knowledge, concepts, and skills in both academic and sectoral aspects.

According to the results of the research conducted by Anderson and Swenson (2013), which emphasizes the important points regarding the digitalization of public relations and deals with the issue of how to teach digital content, it is important not only to use digital platforms effectively but also to gain a general understanding and curiosity. Considering the similar results of the study conducted by Anderson et al. (2013) and this study, it is understood that media literacy and ICT literacy skills are the skills that a public relations worker should have.

In the study of Atabek and Atabek (2014) on different perspectives in communication education, the attitudes of academicians, students, and professional staff about communication education are examined. According to the results of the research, it is determined that all three groups have a positive attitude towards increasing the opportunities in subjects such as practical lessons, technological facilities, and foreign language education. At this point, when looking at the similar aspects of the results of Atabek et al. (2014) study with the results of this study, it can be stated that the flipped and blended digital education model associated with practical lessons and technological facilities is important in 21st century public relations education.

In the study conducted by Ewing, Kim, Kinsky, Moore, and Freberg (2018), the importance of data analysis to obtain target audience insights in the field of public relations, to measure communication strategies, and to evaluate campaign efforts are referred to. Considering the results of the research in this direction, it is stated by the researchers that the importance of teaching digital and social media analytics in public relations education is one of the increasingly important issues. Considering the similar aspects of the study conducted by Ewing et al. (2018) with this study, it is understood that it is important for individuals working in the field of public relations to possess information, media, and technology skills.

As a result, public relations academics and students must be familiar with life and career, learning and innovation, information, media and technology skills, themes, and competencies. It is among the findings of the relevant studies and the results of this research that the flipped education model and the blended education model, which will contribute to the personal development of individuals in many points, contribute to gaining these qualities to individuals. Researchers who will carry out future studies on public relations education may be advised to carry out studies in which academicians working in universities other than state universities (private/foundation) are selected as participants, by increasing the sample size or working with different sample groups.

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