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Digital Citizenship

The New Citizenship

The implementation of mobile technologies brings new opportunities to redefine pedagogies and educational spaces in the 21st century. This chapter reports examples of best practice in the delivery of digital citizenship by teachers, schools, and school districts in the United States, Canada, and Australia. Digital citizenship (also cyber-citizenship) refers to the use of technology to enhance individual and community capacity to effectively participate in society through online media. From a civic standpoint, digital citizenship aims to have every citizen contribute to the ever-advancing and continuous development of democratic societies. Given the diversity of conceptualizations about digital citizenships in this book, the term refers to civic understandings for the protection and respect in digital media for oneself, for others, and intellectual property.

During the 1930s, Shoghi Effendi, a global visionary ahead of his time, predicted that “A mechanism of world inter-communication will be devised, embracing the whole planet, freed from national hindrances and

restrictions, and functioning with marvelous swiftness and perfect regularity” (Shoghi Effendi, 1938, p. 204). Those were the days of radiotelegraphy which, with its technological limitations, was developing very quickly to fundamentally support warlike purposes in between the first and second world wars.

After the dust and smoke of nearly 80 years, the Internet offers a panorama beyond what the wireless Morse code and radio stations offered. As the Internet is an enabler of basic human rights, like the entitlement to free expression and access to information, restricted access to it is considered now a violation of the individual’s human rights (United Nations, 2011). The UN report reads,

Given that the Internet has become an indispensable tool for realizing a range of human rights, combating inequality, and accelerating development and human progress, ensuring universal access to the Internet should be a priority for all states. Each State should thus develop a concrete and effective policy... to make the Internet widely available, accessible and affordable to all segments of population. (p. 22)

Nowadays the Internet unites all humanity as one global community allowing three billion users to access available information equivalent to the total number of words spoken by the human race from its inception. If you laid this information on iPads and put them one on top of another, the resultant pile would be the same as the distance from the earth to the moon plus an another of the same length.

Great as are the benefits of new technologies, so also are the problems they create. Technology throughout human history may actualize human potential and advance civilization but may also cause negative situations because technologies are not neutral. They certainly create new ways of doing things in a disruptive manner. It is therefore necessary to anticipate problems in the process of implementing them. In the final analysis, any technology is just a tool to achieve an end.

Technology creates, modifies, and/or reinvents new roles. For instance, the discovery of the microwave oven and the pressure cooker allowed people to save time and live a more comfortable life. But they also brought about poor nutritional habits, such as the consumption of preservatives; they also exposed people to the effects of radiation. The invention of the email changed people’s everyday life and work in terms of speeding communications but also disrupted the postal industry, causing the loss of employment.

The Perils of Technology

Greek literature narrates in a sublime way the possible consequences of technology. The mythological Prometheus stole the divine fire from Hephaestus, the god of technology, and gave it to humanity. Fire represents the foundation of craftsmanship and the beginning of civilization. Furious, Zeus, the chief god, punished him chaining the daring Prometheus to a mountain where an eagle ate his liver every day for his disobedience. Also as a chastisement, Zeus introduced Pandora, the first woman, to Epimetheus, Prometheus's brother, and as a wedding gift they received an amphora containing all the evil spirits of mankind. Pandora was not supposed to open the object. However, dominated by curiosity, she opened it to see its contents. Realizing her mistake, she quickly closed the amphora, but by that time it was too late because all the spirits had escaped, except the spirit of hope. Prometheus was the divinity that created man out of clay.

Literature also describes the monster invented by Victor Frankenstein, which was created to satisfy the scientist, who felt the allure of technology. We all know that the monster eventually demanded of the scientist the creation of a companion. The inventor, afraid of the consequences of creating a new breed of beasts, totally rejected that possibility, which prompted the monster's fury against him. We also know that the monster pursued Victor Frankenstein till the end of his life. As the inventor said in the novel, "Nothing is so painful to the human mind as a great and sudden change." Interestingly, the original subtitle of the novel was "The Modern Prometheus."

Technology can also be an instrument of power used by the most literate to dominate the illiterate. According to the scholar Mariusz Ziolkowski from the University of Warsaw,

Christopher Columbus on his third voyage had supply problems and the inhabitants of the island did not want to supply. In astronomical tables he read in two days would be a lunar eclipse then threatened the inhabitants that he would take away the moon. When the eclipse occurred, they were in fear and immediately stocked the explorers with provisions. Astronomy in all cultures was an instrument of power. (2014)

Other examples might include the creation of atomic energy that was used for the instant death of 220,000 civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a discovery that simultaneously developed curative wonders in nuclear medicine through scientific research. The green revolution brought the benefits of mechanization of agricultural production and increasing productivity. However, it enabled the introduction of chemical fertilizers and pesticides

in food and the decline in soil fertility, the expansion of monocropping practices discouraging native cultures and poor farmers, the depletion of groundwater due to the new irrigation systems as well as rural impoverishment epitomized by increasing migration to cities. Similarly, the industrial revolution fostered increases in productivity indexes but also fomented the institutionalization of child labor in factories, the pollution of cities, poor working conditions, and tension between social classes. The ancient Chinese used gunpowder not for warfare but for fireworks in ritual ceremonies, while Adolf Hitler's motivation in the use of gunpowder was evil. According to his minister, Albert Speer, "The extent of the crimes was also due to the fact that Hitler was the first to be able to employ the implements of technology to multiply crime" (Speer, 1969/1970, p. 521). History remembers Leonardo da Vinci as the inventor who did not share some of his inventions, like his submarine, with the governing rulers of that time for fear of being misused.

Postman (2011) believes that education can be subversive as well as conservative. More recently, the introduction of digital technologies in schools has led to the outbreak of unanticipated problems (Handal, Ritter, & Marcovitz, 2014). The most serious example is the emergence of so-called cyberbullying which, cruel and ruthless, can inflict serious injury on the victim because of the anonymous conditions in which it develops. Such a phenomenon has changed the face of traditional bullying, from the kind that happens face-to-face to its digital and anonymous format, causing suicides in the young population. Not only students but also teachers, schools, and educational systems have been affected and are urged to develop intervention programs with a rapidity that the seriousness of the situation requires. Given this delocalization of human relationships, previous understanding is being questioned, for instance, the radius of the so-called duty of care now appears to extend beyond the physical boundaries of the school (Pelletier, Handal, Khalil, & Frances, in press).

For example, 43% of teenagers between 13 and 17 years reported having experienced some form of cyberbullying, with more incidences among the female cohort (Moessner, 2007). A study in the United States among 1,964 students revealed that those affected by cyberbullying, either as victims or perpetrators, are more likely to have suicidal thoughts (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). Moreover, one third of Internet traffic is said to be related to pornography (Yagielowicz, 2012). Online addictions, sleep deprivation, nomophobia (no-mobile-phone anxiety), (King, Valença, & Nardi, 2010), and eye strain are among other challenges that schools and parents face when safeguarding the welfare of millions of young children and adolescents. It is also necessary to teach students to be critical and evaluative of

the information provided on the Internet. If we are not rational and reflective, the aforementioned problems can engulf us and technology will consume us like Frankenstein's monster. It is about reflecting on our relationship with technology. Humanity always thought of its relationship to nature as one of depletion, disposability, and domination. It would be unwise to follow the same pattern with our current approaches to technology.

To this list we might add the need to educate students to respect intellectual property, respect others, and ensure their personal safety in digital spaces. All this suggests the need to pack this knowledge and learning under a concept which many call digital citizenship. If properly unraveled, such a body of knowledge can stop the disadvantages of digital technology and direct it to productive educational uses.

What is Digital Citizenship?

Digital citizenship relates to the ethical use of electronic technology as well as the individual's ability to effectively participate in society through online spaces. In school education terms, digital citizenship aims at preparing our students in the skills of the 21st century, calls which have been grouped by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) as follows: (a) learning and innovation skills; (b) information, media, and technology skills; and (c) life and career skills (P21, n.d., p. 1).

Many people have an idea of what a good citizen should be. It is certainly a social and behavioural issue. However, the question of the hour becomes what a good digital citizen is and how can we educate our children toward that goal. One way to answer those questions is to return to the 15th century and ponder the skills needed to become a good reader when the printing press was invented by Johannes Gutenberg (1398–1468). Such a profile required not only the ability to know the alphabet and to recognize and reproduce written words but also the ability to explain content to non-literate people, as well as higher-order skills such as interpreting, analysis, and deconstructing texts. It also meant the ability to write on complex issues in sciences and humanities, to read materials critically, arguing opinions, documenting research methods, and describing in writing scientific processes and discoveries. Being a good reader also meant creating different literary genres such as fictional and journalistic narratives and, from an instructional perspective, creating pedagogies to teach the masses to read and write. It is interesting that the invention of the press represented the beginning of children's literature.

What Are the Obstacles to Teach Digital Citizenship?

There are several obstacles that come up to include concepts associated with digital citizenship within the school. Among them is the growing divorce in the school curriculum between “being” and “doing.” Probably because of the secularization of the curriculum, the teaching of ethical principles has lost impetus in the curriculum. In the name of pragmatism, empiricism, and utilitarianism promoted by neoliberal agendas, the school curriculum these days mostly extols the acquisition of mathematical skills and language perhaps as a genetic remnant of the IQ tests now, fortunately, in disuse given the discourse on multiple intelligences (Gardner, 2000).

The secularization of education has not only to do with issues regarding religious education. It is partly the result of deterministic conceptions of research methods and psychologies of learning. Pavlov, the creator of classic conditioning, compared humans to dogs in their way of learning. Behaviorism compared them to gear boxes amenable to manipulation without considering the affective domain. In turn, cognitivist theorists compared human understanding to the hardware of a computer such as keyboard, monitor, memory, and central processing unit. In turn, Piaget compared the learning of students to plants that support their nutrition from the soil through organic processes of assimilation and accommodation.

Certainly, the industrial revolution and capitalism changed after a century of neoliberalism, having a parallel effect in education. Division of labor became flexible specialization and Fordism is still present through the standardization of the school curriculum (Kahn & Kellner, 2007) in what has been called the “McDonalds-ification” of education. Industrial capitalism and its predecessors left us a fragmented understanding of human knowledge such as mathematics, biology, geography, history, *et cetera*, whereby interdisciplinary fertilization and ethics was hardly well-received. By putting strong value on productivity and efficiency, not much space was left for ethics and civic education to flourish in the curriculum. *Doing* cannot be separated from *being*, as this educational district administrator said during the interviews:

Digital citizenship is a teachable activity. It is teachable content because digital citizenship can be considered as part of your instructional message. We are preparing our kids for college and career so you have to know how to be responsible in cyberspace. That is something that you have to learn. It is not about learning language arts and mathematics. But if you are in a new job and play Internet games all day, it is equally bad. It is a deliberate conversation about being citizens online as much as it is offline. It is not about digital citizenship, is something we do.

The Capabilities Model

The proposed model for the teaching of digital citizenship incorporates an ethical concept. It is based on the concept of capabilities, which includes integrating **A**ttitudes or dispositions (the know-why), **S**kills or abilities (the know-how) and **K**nowledge (the know-what), all represented by the acronym ASK. Graphically, the model is presented in Figure 7.1.

What is a capability? According to Farzam Arbab,

By the term “capability” we mean developed capacity to think and to act in a well-defined sphere of activity and according to a well-defined purpose. We use the word to refer not to individual skills but rather to complex spheres of thought and action each requiring a number of related skills and abilities. Moreover, we place great importance on the notion that the gradual acquisition of a given capability, in addition to the mastering of skills, is dependent on the assimilation of relevant information, the understanding of a set of concepts, the development of certain attitudes, and advancement in a number of spiritual qualities. (2000, p. 233)

Some of these attitudes related to online behaviors might include self-discipline, courtesy, integrity, kindness, friendliness, and reliability. Ribble (2015) and Alberta Education (2012) consider respect, education, and protection as major components of a value-based digital citizenship education:

- Respect yourself/respect others (including intellectual property)
- Educate yourself/connect with others
- Protect yourself/protect others

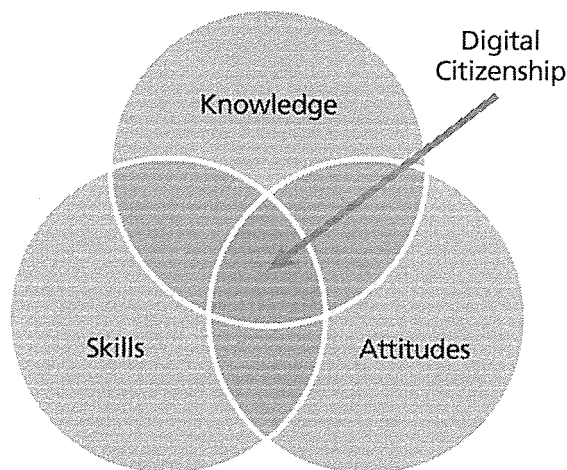


Figure 7.1 The ASK Capability model of digital citizenship.

Among the main digital citizenship skills (Hollandsworth, Dowdy, & Donovan, 2011; Sonck, Kuiper, & de Haan, 2012; Sonck & de Haan, 2013) are the following:

- Apply the principles of digital safety and security in personal life
- Demonstrate acceptable legal and ethical behaviors within the digital environment
- Weigh the implications of membership to digital communities and social media
- Be able to critically use digital information for his/her own benefit

For knowledge and content, Ribble (2009) includes these topics:

- Etiquette: electronic standards of conduct or procedure
- Communication: electronic exchange of information
- Education/Literacy: the process of teaching and learning about technology and the use of technology
- Access: full electronic participation in society
- Commerce: electronic buying and selling of goods
- Law: electronic responsibility for actions and deeds
- Rights and Responsibilities: those freedoms extended to everyone in a digital world
- Health and Wellness: physical well-being in a digital technology world

Enhancing the Delivery of Digital Citizenship

Great examples can be drawn from other schools around the world as to how to implement digital citizenships in schools. The following curricular, organizational, and logistics cases illustrate a wealth of strategies that schools can follow.

Curriculum Materials

A number of curricula have been developed to deliver digital citizenship around the world. Some are of modular design and others are of spiral design. For example, the spiral curriculum in New Zealand provides age-learning opportunities, emphasizing skills for protection in cyberspace and appropriate use of digital tools through guided activities (NetSafe, 2015). A digital citizen is defined as an individual who

- is a confident and capable user of ICT;

- uses technologies to participate in educational, cultural, and economic activities;
- uses and develops critical-thinking skills in cyberspace;
- is literate in the language, symbols, and texts of digital technologies;
- is aware of ICT challenges and can manage them effectively;
- uses ICT to relate to others in positive, meaningful ways;
- demonstrates honesty and integrity and ethical behavior in their use of ICT;
- respects the concepts of privacy and freedom of speech in a digital world; and
- contributes and actively promotes the values of digital citizenship (NetSafe, 2015, p. 3).

The three main components of the curriculum are learn, guide, and protect. The Learn component sequence is as follows:

Years 1–6: Focus on building a range of digital literacy skills

Years 7–10: Focus on competencies, values, and behaviors

Years 11–13: Focus on opportunities to practice skills in authentic contexts.

Other curricula, like that of New South Wales, are set in terms of six domains wherein the theme “being safe, positive, and responsible online” is central and the themes of cyberbullying and cybersafety cross all domains (NSW Department of Education & Communities, 2015). The six domains are outlined consist of

- Digital conduct
- Digital footprint
- Digital relationship
- Digital health and well-being
- Digital law
- Digital financial literacy.

Similarly, syllabi and lesson plans are offered by external providers, such as Common Sense, which was adopted by some schools in Alberta (Common Sense, 2015). It provides a curriculum based on gradual grades: K–2, 3–5, 6–8, 9–12, including

- Privacy and security
- Digital footprint and reputation

- Self-image and identity
- Creative credit and copyright
- Relationship and communities
- Information literacy
- Cyberbullying
- Internet safety

A variety of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have also created websites where students and teachers can find creative ideas accommodating the learning styles of young generation styles instead of teaching digital citizenship in a vertical and expository manner. Activities include role-plays, reflective group learning, scenarios, and digital games with a strong pedagogical foundation that attracts the attention and interest of youth and children.

Some of these digital citizenship websites, in addition to Common Sense Media, are as follows:

Embrace Civility

<http://www.embracecivility.org>

Digital Citizenship (Jason Ohler)

<http://www.jasonohler.com/digitalCitizenship/index.cfm>

Hector's World

<http://hectorsworld.netsafe.org.nz>

Teachers First

<http://www.teachersfirst.com/spectopics/safety.cfm>

Bullying No Way

<http://www.bullyingnoway.gov.au/>

Cybersmart

<http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/>

WiredSafety (USA)

<http://www.wiredsafety.org/>

I Keep Safe (USA)

www.ikeepsafe.org

Modular Versus Embedded Delivery

Digital citizenship is either inserted into the school curriculum as a discrete unit or is integrated across the curriculum. In some schools, digital citizenship is delivered through a technology subject which is mandatory for all first-year students. In a particular school, digital citizenship is delivered online and all students take the course at the end of Year 9 or beginning of Year 10. Other schools include digital citizenship during the orientation period and

when students transition through the different stages of schooling. At those occasions students are prepared for iPad usage with practical sessions. In a particular school, digital citizenship is taught within the character development program to teach using the Internet throughout the year.

One district office modified the school schedule to accommodate the delivery of digital citizenship:

We wrote digital citizenship into the curriculum. We asked the middle schools to take once a month a different theme surrounding digital citizenship, and that only required two days, two periods, to get through the lessons, with their students. Some schools used the four periods, but others extended their time. A lot of schools used their guidance counselor for that. Schools had an extended day with an educational enrichment period to implement Internet safety through lesson plans on cybersecurity content. You can teach this curriculum however you want, do it wherever you want, but we have to guarantee the taught concepts.

Engaging the School Staff

Getting teachers to develop digital citizenship lessons is key to creating teaching resources relevant to the school experience. For example, one district office invites teachers for several days to run lesson plans on digital citizenship for teachers to use and make them available on the district portal for downloading. In another case, a district office asked people to bring their teaching experiences and lessons and then hired a writer to document their resources. It is noteworthy that some districts train students to talk about digital citizenship to their peers. In general, it appears that getting parents, teachers, and students to be aware of the digital citizenship agenda is causing an impact and creating a whole culture of learning.

Examples were also collected from a school district drawing assistance from other school staff such as guidance counselors, librarians, and computer teachers:

In our guidance counseling office, there already is a character education program that they utilize countywide and is able to tap that type of resources into the four schools. The guidance counselors have something called Character Ed. It is actually a curriculum the county has purchased, and the guidance counselors are responsible for using it.

We rolled out the digital citizenship curriculum out to the elementary schools, after we had been so successful with the middle schools. The librarians and the computer teachers at the elementary schools already had their own online digital citizenship workshop classes that they utilize. So we were

able to give them resources to add since they were able to have these iPads each day to work with the students.

Educating Parents

In one Sydney school, workshops for parents on cybersafety and cyberbullying are delivered. Information for parents is provided on the school portal. One Adelaide school reminds their parents at workshops about simple requirements such as

- Devices must be kept out of the bedroom
- No Internet access from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m.
- Charge devices as a family
- Complete work in an open space
- Take an interest in your child's engagement with the Internet

Age is an important factor taken into account in the delivery of digital citizenship. For example, in the early grades, there are informal lessons to be taught without direct content:

As a staff, we thought, what are the kind of things that are appropriate for which grade level? So there are two different pieces to that. One is the digital competencies. For grade 1, I want all the kids to know how to go to the computer, have a logon with their own specific logon and password, how to get to a word processing document, how to open an app, type of things. In terms of digital citizenship is for example, not sharing your password. These are the little pieces and then we start building different things. For instance, in Grade 2 we are going to start saving things or whatever, so make sure to save it in the right spot. If you are going to share with your teacher, then you do not share it with everybody because not everybody needs to see it. It is kind of connecting digital citizenship to the task that is being taught. When you are doing things in Grade 3, when you are learning how to write a letter or complain or compose an email, that might be also the time to talk about spam. So digital citizenship is really embedded and is progressive.

Toward Responsible Use

There appears to be a growing support for teaching students responsibility in cyberspace rather than putting restrictions on them. There consensus is shifting from, "You cannot do this," to "What can you do?" We are trying to shift from what you cannot do to what you can do." Districts and private schools have different policies as to what block—apart from the common

ban on pornography, gambling, etc.—should be applied, but there is a movement to abandon strict filtering models, except for the early years, who need more filtering. For example, some places ban Facebook and YouTube, while others do not. In general, students—and, in some cases, parents—sign an Internet acceptable-use form at the time of enrollment.

For one principal superintendent, the decision to move away from blocking was the result of observing that, unlike 7 years previously, students were bringing their own devices with their own data plans and getting connected online off the school Internet connection. Such a shift made them believe that that was the time to emphasize digital citizenship in order to create responsible citizens.

External Partnerships

Partnering with external providers also seems a powerful enabler. One school district leader commented,

We partnered with “I keep Safe” [www.ikeepsafe.org] and they came and spent three days at each of the four schools developing lesson plans, training the teachers in Net safety, and then did some additional workshops outside; but they came to the schools and had a comprehensive action plan of what they were going to do.

One particular school district hires training organizations to train teachers. There are digital citizenship policy guidelines to assist schools to design their own digital citizenship locally. They also assess school readiness to see whether a school is ready to deal with digital citizenship education in terms of leaving them free.

It is also important to liaise with local and like-minded organizations. A school district reports that

We are going to have a digital citizenship week. We are going to kick that off with a huge training and awareness campaign about what it takes to be a responsible citizen in the cyberworld. We are doing that in conjunction with the city municipality and so the mayor will come up and we will have activities at multiple locations. We are leveraging external people.

Some Unanswered Questions

In summarizing the main concepts associated with digital citizenship in schools, some questions are left to ponder as teachers effect its implementation:

- How can we revive the connection between “being” and “doing” in schools that only focus on the academic?
- How do we teach values such as justice or kindness? How do these values relate to problems like cyberbullying?
- How do we get an agreement on core values to teach?
- How do we implement the teaching of digital citizenship through the school curriculum while the curriculum is not cross-disciplinary?
- Should digital citizenship be taught through modular, embedded, or spiral curricula?
- As digital citizenship must be demonstrated both inside and outside of school, how are we to measure the effectiveness of programs?
- Which instructional approaches are more effective in the teaching of digital citizenship?

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