SCHOLARSHIP OF TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED LEARNING

SoTEL Symposium 16-18 February 2022

No More Kidding about iKids: It's Time to Take Digital Citizenship Seriously in Higher Education

Michael Cowling
m.cowling@cqu.edu.au
CQUniversity

Abstract

If COVID-19 has taught us anything, it's that even students born in the 21st century are not quite the digital natives we give them credit for being. Whilst the overarching concept of the digital native as proposed by Prensky in 2001 has been hotly contested for many of its generational assumptions over the last 20 years, it's clear anecdotally that until recently, many still believed that students of the 21st century are very comfortable with technology and how it is used.

It's only in the last few years, as the pandemic has forced learning online, that we've realized that perhaps students digital skillset might not be what we think it is. What's more, stories abound of students turning cameras off, or behaving inappropriately in chat, that suggest that the problem is wider than skills, and a more holistic view of what it means to be a digital citizen is needed.

This presentation will take time to understand this trend towards digital citizenship, and what it means for us as scholars of technology enhanced learning. Looking back on past practices, it will make the argument the digital citizenship going forwards need to encompass more than just skills and needs to be more holistic in focus. In doing so, we can really understand how we might construct our curriculum into the future.

First, this presentation will break down the way we've traditionally thought about digital skills (Sturgess, Cowling, & Gray, 2016). Building on recent research, it will help understand what competencies need consideration in this space going forward, and how skills such as social networking or messaging might translate into our classroom.

It will then discuss screen time, and how students approach this aspect of digital citizenship (Orlando, 2021). Rather than talking about banning technology and removing it from classrooms, we will discuss how technology can be used to enhance the classroom experience, whilst also ensuring that students do not get addicted to using it inappropriately. Thoughts on how best to build balanced digital citizens will also be shared.

Concepts of digital safety will also be discussed (Walsh & Pink, 2021), and how this idea compares to our traditional ideas of student safety. Work by the Australian Federal government on cyber safety will be visited to understand how we might enhance this concept with a more holistic mindset.

Finally, student self-control will be touched on (Cowling, 2015). Students of the 21st century face a venerable plethora of possible resources that they can access, with little in the way of age restrictions, or clear indicators of their quality. We will discuss fake news and information overload, understanding how these concepts might fit into the broader narrative.

Through interrogating each of these 'four S's': Skills; Screen Time; Safety; and Self-Control, we will propose a new way to look at the digital native that will set a trend going forward, moving us from digital natives to a clearer, more specific model that suits the iKids emerging out of the post-COVID world.

References

Cowling, M. A. (2015). Models for the Successful Integration of Social Networking into the Studies of Digital Native Students. *Journal of the Australian & New Zealand Student Services Association*, (45).

Orlando, J. (2021). *Life Mode On: How to Feel Less Stressed, More Present and Back in Control with Technology*, Richmond, Vic: Hardie Grant Books.

Prensky, M. (2001). Digital natives, digital immigrants part 2: Do they really think differently?. *On the horizon*.

Sturgess, P., Cowling, M., & Gray, M. (2016, February). Unpacking 'digital competency' exploring the pre-existing skills of enabling education students. In *Proceedings of the Australasian Computer Science Week Multiconference* (pp. 1-4).

Walsh, K., & Pink, E. (2021). Best practice framework for online safety education (Stage 2): Expert review and stakeholder consultation report. eSafety Commissioner, Australia.